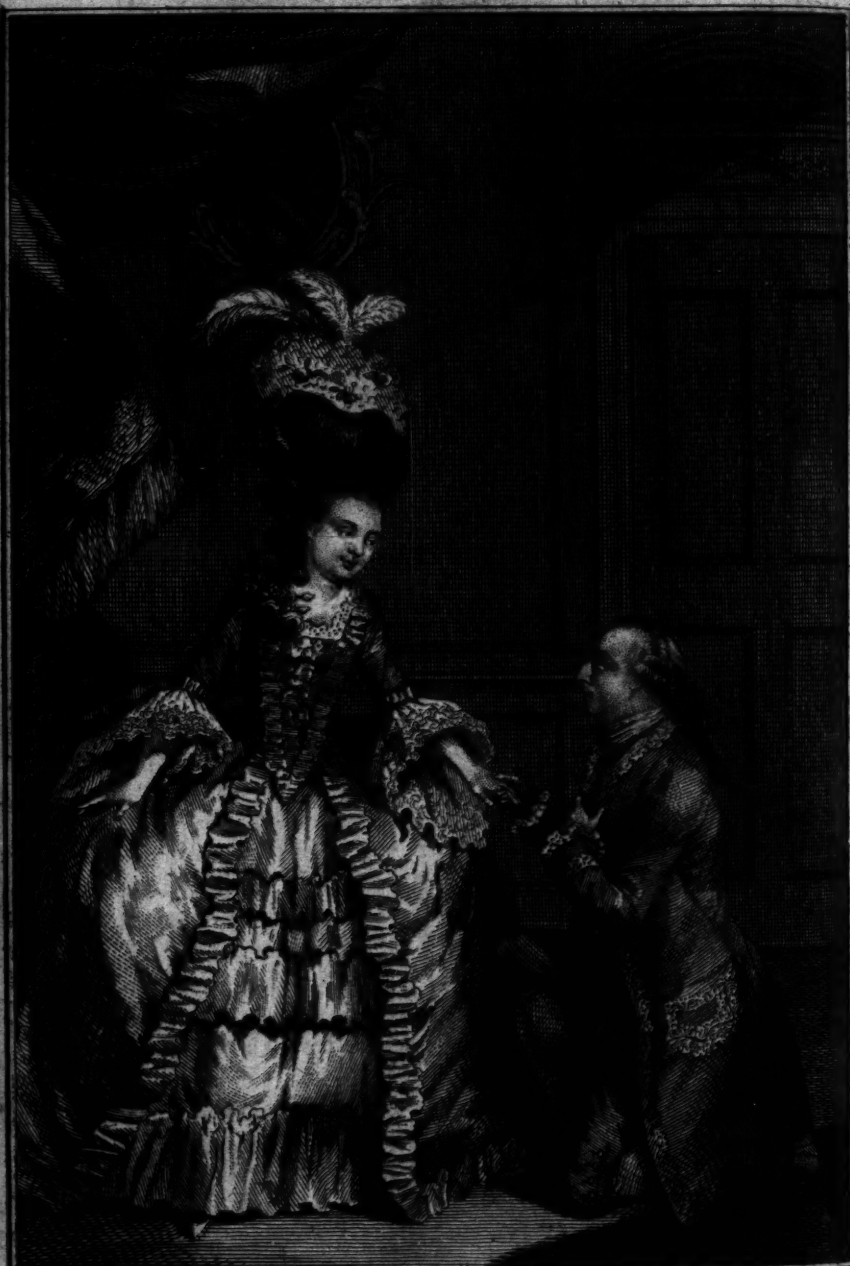


DOUBLE DEALER.



Dodd ad viv. del.

Walker sculp

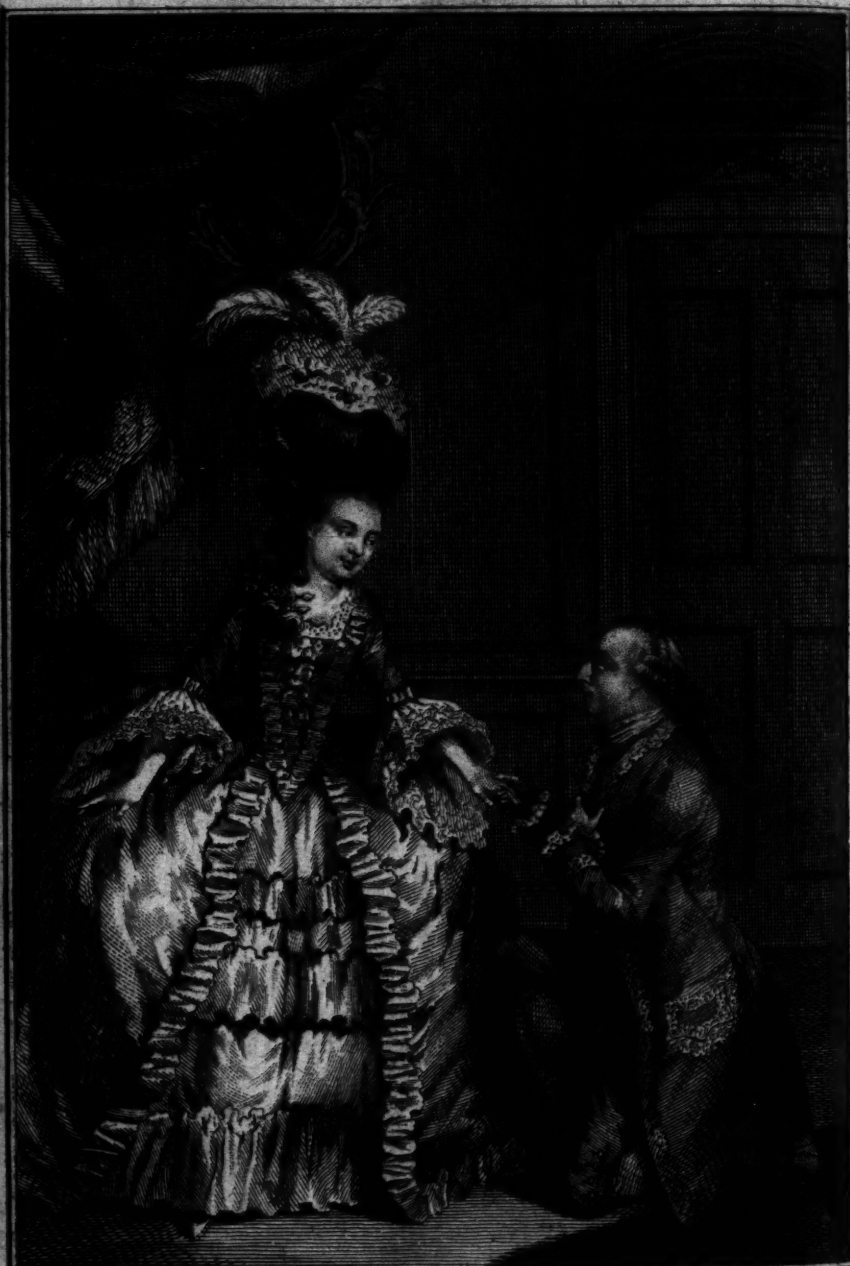
M^R PALMER and M^{RS} GARDINER,
in the Characters of
CARELESS and LADY PLYANT.

Car. Can you be so cruel

L. Ply. Arise I beseech you.

Act 4. Sc. 2.

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THE

804

DOUBLE DEALER.

A

COMEDY.

By Mr. CONGREGUE.

Marked with the Variations in the

MANAGER'S BOOK,

AT THE

Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden.



L O N D O N :

Printed for T. DAVIES; T. LOWNDES; T. CASLON;
W. NICOLL; and S. BLADON.

M. DCC. LXXVII.

DOUBLE DE ALER

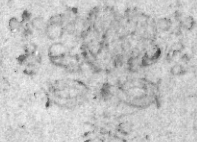
C O M M E D I E

M R C O N G R E V E

M A N A G E R S B O O K

The Reader is desired to observe, that the passages omitted in the Representation at the Theatres are here preserved, and marked with inverted Commas ; as in Lines 13, 14, in Page 7.

C O M M E D I E



L O W D O N :

Printed for T. DAVIES, T. BOWLER, T. C. BAKER, W. NICOLL, and S. BARNARD.

1794

P R O L O G U E.

MOOORS have this way (as story tells) to know
 Whether their brats are truly got, or no;
 Into the sea, the new-born babe is thrown,
 There as instinct directs, to swim, or drown.
 A barbarous device, to try if spouse
 Has kept religiously her nuptial vows.

Such are the trials, poets make of plays;
 Only they trust to more inconstant seas;
 So does our author, this his child commit
 To the tempestuous mercy of the pit,
 To know if it be truly born of wit.

Criticks avaunt; for you are fish of prey,
 And feed, like sharks, upon an infant play,
 Be ev'ry monster of the deep away;
 Let's have a fair trial, and a clear sea.

Let Nature work, and do not damn too soon,
 For life will struggle long, ere it sink down:
 And will at least rise thrice, before it drown.
 Let us consider, had it been our fate,
 Thus hardly to be prov'd legitimate!
 I will not say, we'd all in danger been,
 Were each to suffer for his mother's sin:
 But by my troth I cannot avoid thinking,
 How nearly some good men might have 'scap'd sinking.
 But, Heav'n be prais'd, this custom is confin'd
 Alone to th' offspring of the Muses kind:
 Our christian cuckolds are more bent to pity;
 I know not one Moor-husband in the city.
 T'ib' good man's arms the chopping bastard thrives,
 For he thinks all his own that is his wife's.

Whatever fate is for this play design'd,
 The poet's sure he shall some comfort find:
 For if his Muse has play'd him false, the worst
 That can befall him, is, to be divorc'd;
 You husbands judge, if that, be to be curs'd.

Dramatis Personæ.

	M E N.	AT COVENT-GARDEN.
Maskwell, —	—	Mr. AICKIN.
Lord Touchwood, —	—	Mr. CLARKE.
Mellefont, —	—	Mr. WROUGHTON.
Careless, —	—	Mr. LEWIS.
Lord Froth, —	—	Mr. BOOTH.
Brisk, —	—	Mr. LEE LEWIS.
Sir Paul Plyant, —	—	Mr. MACKLIN.

	W O M E N.	
Lady Touchwood, —	—	Miss JACKSON.
Cynthia, —	—	Miss LEESON,
Lady Froth, —	—	Mrs. MATTOCKS.
Lady Plyant, —	—	Miss MACKLIN.

Chaplain, Boy, Footmen, and Attendants.

The SCENE, a Gallery in Lord Touchwood's House, with Chambers adjoining.

T H E
D O U B L E D E A L E R.

A C T. I.

Enter Careless, crossing the stage, with his hat, gloves, and sword in his hands; as just risen from table: Melifont following him.

Mel. **N**ED, Ned, whither so fast? What, turn'd flincher! Why, you wo'not leave us?

Care. Where are the women? I'm weary of drinking, and begin to think them the better company.

Mel. Then thy reason staggers, and thou'rt almost tipsy.

Care. No, faith, but your fools grow noisy—and if a man must endure the noise of words without sense, I think the women have more musical voices and become nonsense better.

Mel. Why, they are at the end of the gallery; retir'd to their tea, and scandal; according to their ancient custom, after dinner.—But I made a pretence to follow you, because I had something to say to you in private, and I am not like to have many opportunities this evening.

Care. And here's this coxcomb most critically come to interrupt you.

Enter Brisk.

Brisk. Boys, boys, lads, where are you? What do you give ground, mortgage for a bottle, ha? *Careless*, this is your trick; you're always spoiling company by leaving it.

Care. And thou art always spoiling company by coming into't.

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Brisk. Pooh, ha, ha, ha! I know you envy me. Spite, proud spite, by the gods! and burning envy—I'll be judg'd by *Mellefont* here, who gives and takes raillery better, you, or I. Pshaw, man, when I say you spoil company by leaving it, I mean you leave nobody for the company to laugh at. I think there I was with you, ha? *Mellefont*.

Mel. O' my word, *Brisk*, that was a home thrust, you have silenc'd him.

Brisk. O my dear *Mellefont*, let me perish, if thou art not the soul of conversation, the very essence of wit and spirit of wine. — The deuce take me if there were three good things said, or one understood, since thy amputation from the body of our society. — He, I think that's pretty and metaphorical enough: P'gad I could not have said it out of thy company, — *Careless*, ha?

Care. Hum, ay, what is't?

Brisk. O, *mon cœur*! What is't! Nay gad I'll punish for want of apprehension: the deuce take me if I tell you.

Mel. No, no, hang him, he has no taste. — But, dear *Brisk*, excuse me, I have a little business.

Clare. Pr'ythee get thee gone; thou seest we are serious.

Mel. We'll come immediately, if you'll but go in, and keep up good humour and sense in the company: Pr'ythee do, they'll fall asleep else.

Brisk. P'gad so they will — Well I will, I will, gad you shall command me from the *Zenith* to the *Nadir*. — But the deuce take me if I say a good thing 'till you come. — But pr'ythee dear rogue, make haste, pr'ythee make haste, I shall burst else. — And yonder your uncle, my Lord *Touchwood*, swears he'll disinherite you, and Sir *Paul Plyant* threatens to disclaim you for a son-in-law, and my Lord *Froth* won't dance at your wedding to morrow; nor the deuce take me, I won't write your epithalamium — and see what a condition you're like to be brought to.

Mel. Well, I'll speak but three words, and follow you.

Brisk. Enough, enough, *Careless*, bring your apprehension along with you. [Exit.

Care. Pert coxcomb.

Mel. Faith 'tis a good-natur'd coxcomb, and has very enter-

entertaining follies—You must be more humane to him; at this juncture, it will do me service. I'll tell you, I would have mirth continued this day at any rate: tho' patience purchase folly, and attention be paid with noise: There are times when sense may be unseasonable, as well as truth. Pr'ythee do thou wear none to day; but allow *Brisk* to have wit, that thou may'st seem a fool.

Care. Why, how now, why this extravagant proposition?

Mel. O, I would have no room for serious design, for I am jealous of a plot. I would have noise and impertinence keep my Lady *Touchwood's* head from working: 'For hell is not more busy than her brain, nor contains 'more devils, than that imaginations.'

Care. I thought your fear of her had been over—I am not to-morrow appointed for your marriage with *Cynthia*, and her father, Sir *Paul Plyant*, come to settle the writings this day, on purpose?

Mel. True; but you shall judge whether I have not reason to be alarm'd. None besides you, and *Maskwell*, are acquainted with the secret of my aunt *Touchwood's* violent passion for me. Since my first refusal of her addresses, she has endeavour'd to do me all ill offices with my uncle; yet has managed 'em with that subtilty, that to him they have born the face of kindness; while her malice, like a dark lanthorn, only shone upon me, where it was directed. 'Still it gave me less perplexity to prevent the success of her displeasure, than to avoid the importunities of her love; and of two evils, I thought my self favour'd in her aversion:' but whether urg'd by her despair, and the short prospect of time she saw, to accomplish her designs; whether the hopes of revenge, or of her love, terminated in the view of this my marriage with *Cynthia*; I know not; but this morning she surpriz'd me in my own chamber.—

Care. Was there ever such a fury! 'tis well nature has not put it into her sex's power to ravish.—Well, bless us! proceed. What follow'd?

Mel. 'What at first amaz'd me; for I look'd to have seen her in all the transports of a slighted and revengeful woman: but when I expected thunder from her voice, and

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‘lightening in her eyes; I saw her melted into tears, and hush’d into a sigh.’ It was long before either of us spoke, passion had ty’d her tongue, and amazement mine.— In short, the consequence was thus, she omitted nothing that the most violent love could urge, or tender words express; which when she saw had no effect, but still I pleaded honour and nearness of blood to my uncle; then came the storm I fear’d at first: For starting from my bed-side like a fury, she flew to my sword, and with much ado I prevented her doing me or herself a mischief: Having disarm’d her in a gust of passion she left me, and in a resolution, confirm’d by a thousand curses, not to close her eyes, ‘till they had seen my ruin.

Care. Exquisite woman! But what ‘the devil’ does she think, thou hast no more sense, than to get an heir ‘upon her body’ to disinherit thyself: for as I take it, this settlement upon you, is, with a proviso, that your uncle have no children.

Mel. It is so. Well, the service you are to do me, will be a pleasure to yourself; I must get you to engage my Lady *Plyant* all this evening, that my pious aunt may not work her to her interest. And if you chance to secure her to yourself, you may incline her to mine. She’s handsome, and knows it; is very silly, and thinks she has sense, and has an old fond husband.

Care. I confess a very fair foundation, for a lover to build upon.

Mel. For my Lord *Froth*, he and his wife will be sufficiently taken up, with admiring one another, and *Brisk*’s galantry, as they call it. I’ll observe my uncle myself; and *Jack Maskwell* has promised me, to watch my aunt narrowly, and give me notice upon any suspicion. As for Sir *Paul*, my wife father-in-law that is to be, my dear *Cynthia* has such a share in his fatherly fondness, he would scarce make her a moment uneasy, to have her happy hereafter.

Care. So, you have mann’d your works: but I wish you may not have the weakest guard, where the enemy is strongest.

Mel. *Maskwell*, you mean: pr’ythee why should you suspect him?

Care.

THE DOUBLE DEALER. 9

Care. Faith I cannot help it, you know I never lik'd him; I am a little superstitious in physiognomy,

Mel. He has obligations of gratitude to bind him to me; his dependence upon my uncle is through my means.

Care. Upon your aunt you mean.

Mel. My aunt!

Care. I'm mistaken if there be not a familiarity between them, you do not suspect: notwithstanding her passion for you.

Mel. Pooh, pooh, nothing in the world but his design to do me service; and he endeavours to be well in her esteem, that he may be able to effect it.

Care. Well, I shall be glad to be mistaken; but your aunt's aversion in her revenge, cannot be any way so effectually shewn, as in promoting a means to disinherit you. She is handsome and cunning, and naturally amorous. *Maskevell* is flesh and blood at best and opportunities between them are frequent. His affection to you have confessed, is grounded upon his interest, that you have transplanted; and should it take root in my lady, I don't see what you can expect from the fruit.

Mel. I confess the consequence is visible, were your suspicions just.—But see, the company is broke up, let's meet 'em.

Enter Lord Touchwood, Lord Froth, Sir Paul Plyant, and Brisk.

Ld. Touch. Out upon't, nephew—Leave your father-in-law, and me to maintain our ground against young people.

Mel. I beg your lordship's pardon—We were just returning.

Sir Paul. Were you, son? gadsbud much better as it is—Good, strange! I swear I'm almost tipsy—t'other bottle would have been too powerful for me,—as sure as can be it would.—We wanted your company, but Mr. *Brisk*—Where is he? I swear and vow, he's a most facetious person—and the best company.—And my Lord *Froth*, your lordship is so merry a man, he, he, he!

Ld. Froth. O foy, *Sir Paul*, what do you mean? Merry! O barbarous! I'd as lief you call'd me fool.

Sir Paul. Nay, I protest and vow now, 'tis true; when

A 5

Mr. Brisk

10 THE DOUBLE DEALER.

Mr. *Brisk* jokes, your lordship's laugh does so become you, he, he, he!

Ld. *Froth*. Ridiculous! Sir *Paul*, you're strangely mistaken, I find Champagne is powerful. I assure you, Sir *Paul*, I laugh at nobody's jest but my own, or a Lady's; I assure you, Sir *Paul*.

Brisk. How? how, my lord? what affront my wit! Let me perish, do I never say any thing worthy to be laugh'd at?

Ld. *Froth*. O foy, don't misapprehend me, I don't say so, for I often smile at your conceptions. But there is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality, than to laugh; 'tis such a vulgar expression of the passion! every body can laugh. Then especially to laugh at the jest of an inferior person, or when any body else of the same quality does not laugh with one; ridiculous! to be pleased with what pleases the croud! Now when I laugh, I always laugh alone.

Brisk. I suppose that's because you laugh at your own jests, I gad, ha, ha, ha!

Ld. *Froth*. He, he! I swear tho', your raillery provokes me to a smile.

Brisk. Ay, my lord, it's a sign I hit you in the teeth, if you shew 'em.

Ld. *Froth*. He, he, he! I swear that's so very pretty, I can't forbear.

Care. I find a quibble bears more sway in your lordship's face, than a jest.

Ld. *Touch*. Sir *Paul*, if you please we'll retire to the ladies, and drink a dish of tea, to settle our heads.

Sir *Paul*. With all my heart.—Mr. *Brisk*, you'll come to us,—or call me when you joke, I'll be ready to laugh incontinently. [Exit.

Mel. But does you lordship never see comedies?

Ld. *Froth*. O yes, sometimes,—But I never laugh.

Mel. No?

Ld. *Froth*. Oh, no,—Never laugh indeed, sir.

Care. No! why what d'ye go there for?

Ld. *Froth*. To distinguish myself from the commonalty, and mortify the poets; the fellows grow so conceited, when any of their foolish wit prevails upon the side-boxes.

I swear

—I swear,——he, he, he! I have often constrain'd my inclinations to laugh,——he, he! he's to avoid giving them encouragement.

Mel. You are cruel to yourself, my lord, as well as malicious to them.

Ld. Froth. I confess I did myself some violence at first, but now I think I have conquer'd it.

Briek. Let me perish, my lord, but there is something very particular in the humour; 'tis true, it makes against wit, and I'm sorry for some friends of mine that write; but—I'gad, I love to be malicious.—Nay, deuce take me there's wit in't too—And wit must be foil'd by wit; cut a diamond with a diamond; no other way, I'gad.

Ld. Froth. Oh, I thought you would not be long, before you found out the wit.

Care. Wit! In what? Where the devil's the wit, in not laughing when a man has a mind to't?

Briek. O Lord, why can't you find it out?—Why there 'tis, in the not laughing—Don't you apprehend me?—My lord, *Carelefs* is a very honest fellow, but hark'ye, you understand me, somewhat heavy, a little shallow, or so.—Why I'll tell you now, suppose now you come up to me—Nay, pr'ythee *Carelefs* be instructed. Suppose, as I was saying, you come up to me holding your sides, and laughing, as if you would—Well—I look grave, and ask the cause of this immoderate mirth—You laugh on still, and are not able to tell me—Still I look grave, not so much as smile.—

Care. Smile, no, what the devil should you smile at, when you suppose I can't tell you!

Briek. Pshaw, pshaw, pr'ythee don't interrupt me.—But I tell you, you shall tell me—at last—But it shall be a great while first.

Care. Well, but pry'thee don't let it be a great while, because I long to have it over.

Briek. Well then, you tell me some good jest, or very witty thing, laughing all the while as if you were ready to die—and I hear it, and look thus.—Would not you be disappointed?

Care. No; for if it were a witty thing, I should not expect you to understand it.

Ld. *Froth*. O foy, Mr. *Careless*, all the world allow Mr. *Brisk* to have wit; my wife says, he has a great deal, I hope you think her a judge.

Brisk. Pooh, my lord, his voice goes for nothing.—I can't tell how to make him apprehend.—Take it t'other way. Suppose I say a witty thing to you?

Care. Then I shall be disappointed indeed.

Mel. Let him alone, *Brisk*, he is obstinately bent not to be instructed.

Brisk. I'm sorry for him, the deuce take me.

Mel. Shall we go to the ladies, my lord?

Ld. *Froth*. With all my heart, methinks we are a solitude without 'em.

Mel. Or, what say you to another bottle of Champagne?

Ld. *Froth*. O, for the universe, not a drop more I beseech you. O intemperate! I have a flushing in my face already. [*Takes out a pocket-glass, and looks in it.*]

Brisk. Let me see, let me see, my lord, I broke my glass that was in the lid of my snuff-box. Hum! deuce take me, I have encourag'd a pimple here too.

[*Takes the glass and looks.*]

Ld. *Froth*. Then you must mortify him with a patch; my wife shall supply you. Come, gentlemen, allons, here is company coming. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter Lady Touchwood, and Maskwell.

L. T. I'll hear no more.—You're false and ungrateful; come, I know you're false.

Mask. I have been frail, I confess, madam, for your ladyship's service.

L. T. That I should trust a man, whom I had known betray his friend!

Mask. What friend have I betray'd? Or to whom?

L. T. Your fond friend *Mellefont*, and to me; can you deny it?

Mask. I do not.

L. T. Have you not wrong'd my lord, who has been a father to you in your wants, and given you being? Have you not wrong'd him in the highest manner, 'in his bed'?

Mask. With your ladyship's help, and for your service, as I told you before I can't deny that neither.—Any thing more, madam?

L. T.

L. T. More! audacious villain! O, what's more, is most my shame,—Have you not dishonour'd me?

Mask. No, that I deny; for I never told in all my life: so that accusation's answer'd; on to the next.

L. T. Death, do you dally with my passion? Insolent devil! But have a care,—Provoke me not; for, 'by the eternal fire,' you shall not 'scape my vengeance.—calm villain! How unconcern'd he stands, confessing treachery, and ingratitude! Is there a vice more black!—O I have excuses, thousands, for my faults; fire in my temper, passions in my soul, apt to ev'ry provocation; oppressed at once with love, and with despair. But a sedate, a thinking villain, whose black blood runs temperately bad, what excuse can clear?

Mask. Will you be in temper, madam? I would not talk not to be heard. I have been [*She walks about disorder'd.*] a very great rogue for your sake, and you reproach me with it; I am ready to be a rogue still to do you service; and you are flinging conscience and honour in my face, to rebate my inclinations. How am I to behave myself? You know I am your creature; my life and fortune in your power; to disoblige you, brings me certain ruin. Allow it, I would betray you, I would not be a traitor to myself: I don't pretend to honesty, because you know I am a rascal: but I would convince you from the necessity of my being firm to you.

L. T. Necessity, impudence! can no gratitude incline you, no obligations touch you? 'Have not my fortune, and my person been subjected to your pleasure?' Were you not in the nature of a servant, and have not I in effect made you lord of all, of me, and of my lord? Where is that humble love, the languishing, that adoration, which was once paid me, and everlastingly engaged?

Mask. Fixt, rooted in my heart, whence nothing can remove 'em, yet you——

L. T. Yet, what yet?

Mask. Nay misconceive me not, madam, when I say I have had a gen'rous, and a faithful passion, which you had never favour'd, but through revenge and policy.

L. T. Ha!

Mask.

Mask. Look you, madam, we are alone,——Pray contain yourself, and hear me. You know you lov'd your nephew, when I first sigh'd for you; I quickly found it; an argument that I lov'd; for with that art you veil'd your passion, 'twas imperceptible to all but jealous eyes. This discovery made me bold, I confess it; for by it, I thought you in my power. Your nephew's scorn of you, added to my hopes; I watch'd the occasion, and took you, just repuls'd by him, warm at once, with love and indignation; your disposition, my arguments, and happy opportunity, accomplish'd my design, 'I prest 'the yielding minute, and was blest.' How I have lov'd you since, words have not shewn, then how should words express?

L. T. Well, mollifying devil!——And have I not met your love with forward fire?

Mask. Your zeal I grant was ardent, but misplac'd; there was revenge in view; 'that woman's idol had de-
'fil'd the temple of the god, and love was made a mock-
'worship.——A son and heir would have edg'd young
'Mellefont upon the brink of ruin, and left him none
'but you to catch at for prevention.'

L. T. Again, provoke me! do you wind me like a larum, only to rouse my own still'd soul for your diversion! confusion!

Mask. Nay, madam, I'm gone, if you relapse,——What needs this? I say nothing but what you yourself, in open hours of love, have told me. Why should you deny it? Nay, how can you? Is not all this present heat owing to the same fire? Do you not love him still? How have I this day offended you, but in not breaking off his match with *Cynthia*? Which ere to-morrow shall be done,——had you but patience.

L. T. How, what said you, *Maskwell*.——Another caprice to unwind my temper?

Mask. By Heav'n, no; I am your slave, the slave of all your pleasures; and will not rest 'till I have given you peace, would you suffer me.

L. T. O *Maskwell*, in vain I do disguise me from thee, thou know'st me, know'st the very inmost windings and recesses of my soul.—O *Mellefont*! I burn; married

ried to morrow ! despair strikes me. Yet my soul knows I hate him too : let him but once be mine, and next immediate ruin seize him.

Mask. Compose yourself, you shall possess and ruin him too,——Will that please you ?

L. T. How, how ? Thou dear, thou precious villain, how ?

Mask. You have already been tampering with my Lady *Plyant*.

L. T. I have : She is ready for any impression I think fit.

Mask. She must be thoroughly persuaded, that *Mellefont* loves her.

L. T. She is so credulous that way naturally, and likes him so well, that she will believe it faster than I can persuade her. But I don't see what you can propose from such a trifling design ; for her first conversing with *Mellefont*, will convince her of the contrary.

Mask. I know it.——I don't depend upon it.——But it will prepare something else, and gain us leisure to lay a stronger plot : If I gain a little time, I shall not want contrivance.

*One minute gives invention to destroy,
What to rebuild, will a whole age employ.* [Exeunt.

A C T II.

Enter Lady Froth and Cynthia.

Cynt. **I**NDEED, madam ! Is it possible your ladyship could have been so much in love ?

L. Froth. I could not sleep ; I did not sleep one wink for three weeks together.

Cynt. Prodigious ! I wonder, want of sleep, and so much love, and so much wit as your ladyship has, did not turn your brain.

L. Froth. O my dear *Cynthia*, you must not rally your friend.——But really, as you say, I wonder too,——

But

But then I had a way.—For between you and I, I had whimsies and vapours, but I gave them vent.

Cynt. How pray, madam.

L. Froth. Oh, I writ, writ abundantly—Do you never write.

Cynt. Write, what?

L. Froth. Songs, elegies, satires, encomiums, panegyrics, lampoons, plays, or heroic poems.

Cynt. O lord, not I, madam; I'm content to be a courteous reader.

L. Froth. O inconsistent! In love, and not write! If my lord and I had been both of your temper, we had never come together,—O bless me; what a sad thing would that have been, if my lord and I should never have met!

Cynt. Then neither my lord nor you would ever have met with your match, on my conscience.

L. Froth. O' my conscience no more we should; thou say'st right—For sure my Lord *Froth* is as fine a gentleman, and as much a man of quality! ah! nothing at all of the common air,—I think I may say he wants nothing, but a blue ribbon and a star, to make him shine, the very phosphorus of our hemisphere. Do you understand those two hard words? If you don't, I'll explain 'em to you.

Cynt. Yes, yes, madam, I'm not so ignorant.—At least I won't own it, to be troubled with your instructions. [*Aside.*]

L. Froth. Nay, I beg your pardon; but being deriv'd from the *Greek*, I thought you might have escap'd the etymology.—But I'm the more amaz'd, to find you a woman of letters, and not write! bless me! how can *Mellefont* believe you love him?

Cynt. Why faith, madam, he that won't take my word, shall never have it under my hand.

L. Froth. I vow *Mellefont's* a pretty gentleman, but methinks he wants a manner.

Cynt. A manner! what's that, madam?

L. Froth. Some distinguishing quality, as for example, the bell air or brilliant of Mr. *Brisk*; the solemnity, yet complaisance of my lord, or something of his own that should look a little *Je-ne-scai quoi*; he is too much a mediocrity, in my mind.

Cynt.

Cynt. He does not indeed affect either pertness or formality; for which I like him: Here he comes.

L. Froth. And my lord with him: Pray observe the difference. *Enter Lord Froth, Mellefont and Brisk*

Cynt. Impertinent creature! I could almost be angry with her now. *[Aside.*

L. Froth. My lord, I have been telling *Cynthia*, how much I have been in love with you; I swear I have; I'm not ashamed to own it now; Ah! it makes my heart leap, I vow, I sigh when I think on't: my dear lord! Ha, ha, ha! do you remember, my lord?

[Squeezes him by the hand, looks kindly on him, sighs, and then laughs out.]

Ld. Froth. Pleasant creature! perfectly well, ah! that look, ay, there it is; who could resist! 'twas so my heart was made a captive first, and ever since t'has been in love with happy slavery.

L. Froth. O that tongue, that dear deceitful tongue! that charming softness in your mien and your expression, and then your bow! good my lord, bow as you did when I gave you my picture, here suppose this my picture—*[Gives him a pocket glass.]* Pray mind my lord; ah! he bows charmingly; nay, my lord, you shan't kiss it so much; I shall grow jealous, I vow now.

[He bows profoundly low, then kisses the glass.]

Ld. Froth. I saw myself there, and kiss'd it for your sake.

L. Froth. Ah! gallantry to the last degree—*Mr. Brisk*, you're a judge; was ever any thing so well bred as my lord?

Brisk. Never any thing; but your ladyship, let me perish.

L. Froth. O prettily turn'd again; let me die but you have a great deal of wit: *Mr. Mellefont*, don't you think *Mr. Brisk* has a world of wit?

Mel. O, yes, madam.

Brisk. O dear, madam——

L. Froth. An infinite deal!

Brisk. O Heav'ns, madam——

L. Froth. More wit than any body.

Brisk. I'm everlastingly your humble servant, deuce take me, madam.

Ld. Froth. Don't you think us a happy couple?

Cynt. I vow, my lord, I think you the happiest couple in the world, for you're not only happy in one another,

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ther, and when you are together, but happy in yourselves, and by yourselves.

Ld. Froth. I hope *Mellefont* will make a good husband too.

Cynt. 'Tis my interest to believe he will, my lord.

Ld. Froth. D'ye think he'll love you as well as I do my wife? I'm afraid not.

Cynt. I believe he'll love me better.

Ld. Froth. Heav'ns! that can never be; but why do you think so?

Cynt. Because he has not so much reason to be fond of himself.

Ld. Froth. O your humble servant for that, dear madam; well, *Mellefont*, you'll be a happy creature.

Mel. Ay, my lord, I shall have the same reason for my happiness that your lordship has, I shall think myself happy.

Ld. Froth. Ah, that's all.

Brisk. [To Lady Froth] Your ladyship is in the right; but I'gad I'm wholly turn'd into satire. I confess I write but seldom, but when I do—keen *Iambicks* I'gad. But my lord was telling me, your ladyship has made an essay toward an heroic poem.

L. Froth. Did my lord tell you? Yes I vow, and the subject is my lord's love to me. And what do you think I call it? I dare swear you won't guess—*The Sillabub*, ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Because my lord's title's *Froth*, I'gad; ha, ha, ha! deuce take me very *àpropos* and surprizing, ha, ha, ha!

L. Froth. He, ay, is not it?—And then I call my lord *Spumoso*; and myself, what d'ye think I call myself?

Brisk. *Laçilla* may be,——'gad I cannot tell,

L. Froth. *Biddy*, that's all; just my own name.

Brisk. *Biddy*! I'gad very pretty——Deuce take me if your ladyship has not the art of surprizing the most naturally in the world,——I hope you'll make me happy in communicating the poem.

L. Froth. O, you must be confident, I must ask your advice.

Brisk. I'm your humble servant, let me perish,——I presume your ladyship has read *Bosju*?

L. Froth. O yes, and *Rapin*, and *Dacier* upon *Aristotle* and

and *Horace*.—My lord, you must not be jealous, I'm communicating all to Mr. *Brisk*.

Ld. *Froth*, No, no, I'll allow Mr. *Brisk*; have you nothing about you to shew him, my dear?

L. *Froth*. Yes, I believe I have.—Mr. *Brisk*, come will you go into the next room? 'and there I'll shew you 'what I have.'

[*Exeunt L. Froth and Brisk.*

Ld. *Froth*. I'll walk a turn in the garden, and come to you. [Exit.]

Mel. You're thoughtful, *Cynthia*?

Cynt. I am thinking, tho' marriage makes man and wife one flesh, it leaves 'em still two fools; and they become more conspicuous by setting off one another.

Mel. That's only when two fools meet, and their follies are oppos'd.

Cynt. Nay, I have known two wits meet, and by the opposition of their wit, render themselves as ridiculous as fools. 'Tis an odd game we're going to play at: What think you of drawing stakes, and giving over in time?

Mel. No, hang't, that's not endeavouring to win, because it's possible we may lose; since we have shuffled and cut, let's e'en turn up trump now.

Cynt. Then I find it's like cards, if either of us have a good hand it is an accident of fortune.

Mel. No, marriage is rather like a game at bowls, fortune indeed makes the match, and the two nearest, and sometimes the two farthest are together, but the game depends intirely upon judgment.

Cynt. Still it is a game, and consequently one of us must be a loser.

Mel. Not at all; only a friendly trial of skill, and the winnings to be laid out in an entertainment.—'What's 'here, the musick!—Oh, my lord has promised the 'company a new song, we'll get 'em to give it us by the 'way [*Musicians crossing the stage.*] Pray let us have the 'favour of you, to practice the song, before the company 'hear it.

SONG.

SONG.

I.

‘**C**YNthia frowns when-e’er I woo to her,
 ‘ Yet she’s wext if I give over;
 ‘ Much she fears I should undo her,
 ‘ But much more to lose her lower;
 ‘ Thus, in doubting, she refuses;
 ‘ And not winning, thus she loses.

II.

‘ Pr’ythee, Cynthia, look behind you,
 ‘ Age and wrinkles will o’ertake you;
 ‘ Then too late desire will find you,
 ‘ When the power must forsake you:
 ‘ Think, O think o’th’ sad condition,
 ‘ To be past, yet wish fruition.

‘ *Mel.* You shall have my thanks below.

‘ [*To the musick, they go out.*”

Enter Sir Paul and Lady Plyant.

Sir Paul. Gads-bud! I am provok’d into a fermentation, as my Lady *Froth* says; was ever the like read of in story?

L. P. *Sir Paul*, have patience; let me alone to rattle him up.

Sir Paul. Pray your ladyship give me leave to be angry.—I’ll rattle him up I warrant you. I’ll teach him with a *certiprari* to make love to my wife.

L. P. You teach him! I’ll teach him myself and make him blush for his dishonourable notions of Lady *Plyant*’s rectitude; so pray, *Sir Paul*, leave him to me and hold you contented.

‘ *Cynt.* Bless me, what makes my father in such a passion?—I never saw him thus before.’

Sir Paul. Hold yourself contented, my Lady *Plyant*—I find passion coming upon me even to desperation, as the philosopher says; and I cannot submit as formerly, therefore give way.

L. P. How now! will you be pleased to retire, and—

Sir Paul. No marry will I not be pleased; I am pleased to be angry, that’s my pleasure at this time.

‘ *Mel.* What can this mean!’

L. P.

L. P. Gads my life, the man's distracted: why how now, who are you? What am I? Slidikins can't I govern you? What did I marry you for? Am I not to be absolute and uncontrollable? Is it fit a woman of my spirit and conduct, should be contradicted in a matter of this concern?

Sir Paul. It concerns me, and only me;—Besides, I'm not to be govern'd at all times. When I am in tranquillity, my Lady Plyant shall command Sir Paul; but when I am provok'd to fury, I cannot incorporate with patience and reason,—as soon may tigers match with tigers, lambs with lambs, and every creature couple with its foe, as the poet says.——

L. P. He's hot-headed still! 'Tis in vain to talk to you; but remember I have a curtain-lecture for you, you disobedient, headstrong brute.

Sir Paul. No, 'tis because I won't be headstrong, because I won't be a brute, and have my head fortify'd, that I am thus exasperated,—But I will protect my honour, and yonder is the violator of my fame.

L. P. 'Tis my honour that is concern'd, and the violation was intended to me. Your honour! You have none but what is in my keeping, and I can dispose of it when I please—therefore don't provoke me.

Sir Paul. Hum, gads-bud she says true—Well, my lady, march on, I will fight under you then: I am convinced, as far as passion will permit.

[L. Plyant and Sir Paul come up to Mellefont.

L. P. Inhuman and treacherous——

Sir Paul. Thou serpent and first tempter of woman-kind.——

Cynt. Bless me! sir; madam; what mean you?

Sir Paul. *Thy, Thy*, come away *Thy*, touch him not, come hither, girl, go not near him, there's nothing but deceit about him; snakes are in his peruke, and the crocodile of *Nilus* is in his wicked appetite; he wou'd devour thy fortune and starve thee alive.

L. P. Dishonourable, impudent creature!

Mel. For Heav'n's sake, madam, to whom do you direct this language!

L. P.

L. P. Have I behav'd myself with all the decorum and nicety, befitting the person of Sir Paul's wife? Have I preserv'd my honour as it were in a snow-house for these three years past? Have I been white and unsully'd even by Sir Paul himself?

Sir Paul. Nay, she has been an invincible wife, even to me, that's the truth on't.

L. P. Have I, I say, preserv'd myself, like a fair sheet of paper, for you to make a blot upon? —

Sir Paul. And she shall make a simile with any woman in England.

Mel. I am so amaz'd, I know not what to say.

Sir Paul. Do you think my daughter, this pretty creature; gads-bud she's a wife for a cherubin! Do you think her fit for nothing but to be a stalking horse, to stand before you, while you take aim at my wife; gads-bud I was never angry before in my life, and I'll never be appeas'd again.

Mel. Confusion! this is my aunt; such malice can be engendred no where else. [Aside.

L. P. Sir Paul, take Cynthia from his sight; leave me to strike him with theremorfe of his intended crime.

Cynt. Pray, sir, stay, hear him, I dare affirm he's innocent.

Sir Paul. Innocent! Why! hark'ee, come hither, Thy, hark'ee, I had it from his aunt, my sister Touchwood,—gads-bud he does not care a farthing for any thing of thee, but thy portion, why he's in love with my wife; he would have tantaliz'd thee, and made a cuckold of thy poor father,—and that would certainly have broke my heart—'I'm sure if ever I should have horns, they 'would kill me; they would never come kindly, I should 'die of 'em, like a child, that was cutting his teeth—'I should indeed, Thy—therefore come away;' but Providence has prevented all, therefore come away, when I bid you.

Cynt. I must obey. [Exeunt Sir Paul and Cynthia.

L. P. O, such a thing! the impiety of it startles me—to wrong so good, so fair a creature, and one that loves you tenderly—'tis a barbarity of barbarities, and nothing could be guilty of it—

Mel.

Mel. But the greatest villain imagination can form I grant it; and next to the villainy of such a fact, is the villainy of aspersing me with the guilt. How? which way was I to wrong her? For yet I understand you not.

L. P. Why, gads my life, cousin *Mellefont*, you cannot be so peremptory as to deny it; when I tax you with it to your face; for now *Sir Paul's* gone, you are *coram nobis*.

Mel. By Heav'n, I love her more than life, or—

L. P. Fiddle, faddle, don't tell me of this and that, and ev'ry thing in the world, but give me mathemacular demonstration, answer me directly—But I have not patience—Oh! the impiety of it, as I was saying, and the unparallel'd wickedness! O merciful father! How could you think to reverse nature so, to make the daughter the means of procuring the mother?

Mel. The daughter to procure the mother!

L. P. Ay, for, tho' I am not *Cynthia's* own mother, I am her father's wife; and that's near enough to make it incest.

Mel. Incest! O my precious aunt, and the devil in conjunction. [Aside.]

L. P. O reflect upon the horror of that, and then the guilt of deceiving every body; marrying the daughter, only to dishonour the bed of the father; and then seducing me, 'debauching my purity, and perverting me' from the road of virtue, in which I have trod thus long, and never made one trip, not one *faux pas*; 'O consider it, what would you have to answer for, if you should provoke me to frailty? Alas! humanity is feeble, Heav'n knows! very feeble, and unable to support itself.'

Mel. Where am I? Is it day? and am I awake? madam—

L. P. And nobody knows how circumstances may happen together.—To my thinking, now I could resist the strongest temptation.—But yet I know, 'tis impossible for me to know whether I could or not, there's no certainty in the things of this life.

Mel. Madam, pray give me leave to ask you one question.—

L. P.

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L. P. O Lord, ask me the question, I'll swear, I'll swear it; I swear I'll deny it——therefore don't ask me, nay you shan't ask me, I swear I'll deny it. O Gemini, you have brought all the blood into my face; I warrant I am as red as a turkey-cock; O fy, cousin *Mellefont*!

Mel. Nay, madam, hear me; I mean——

L. P. Hear you, no, no; I'll deny you first, and hear you afterwards. For one does not know how ones mind may change upon hearing.—Hearing is one of the senses, and all the senses are fallible; I won't trust my honour, I assure you; my honour is infallible and uncomatible.

Mel. For Heav'n's sake, madam,——

L. P. O name it no more——Bless me, how can you talk of Heav'n! and have so much wickedness in your heart? May be you don't think it a sin.—They say some of you gentlemen don't think it a sin.—'May be it is no 'sin to them that don't think it so;' indeed, if I did not think it a sin—But still my honour, if it were no sin,—But then, to marry my daughter, for the conveniency of frequent opportunities,—I'll never consent to that, as sure as can be, I'll break the match.

Mel. Death and amazement.—Madam, upon my knees——

L. P. Nay, nay, rise up, come you shall see my good-nature. I know love is powerful, and no body can help his passion: 'Tis not your fault; nor I swear it is not mine,—How can I help it, if I have charms? And how can you help it, if you are made a captive? 'I swear it 'is pity it should be a fault,—But my honour,—well, 'but your honour! too,—but the sin!—well but the necessity.'—O lord, here's somebody coming, I dare not stay. Well, you must consider of your crime; and strive as much as can be against it,—strive be sure—But don't be melancholick, don't despair.—But never think that I'll grant you any thing; O lord, no.—But be sure you lay aside all thoughts of the marriage, for tho' I know you don't love *Cynthia*, only as a blind for your passion to me; yet it will make me jealous.—O lord, what did I say? Jealous! no, no, I can't be jealous, for I must not love you,—therefore don't hope.—But don't despair neither.—O, they're coming, I must fly. [*Exit.*

Mel.

Mel. [*After a pause.*] So then,—spite of my care and foresight, I am caught, caught in my security.—Yet this was but a shallow artifice, unworthy of my Machiavelian aunt: there must be more behind, ‘this is but the first flash, the priming of her engine; destruction follows hard, if not most presently prevented.’

Enter Maskwell.

Maskwell, welcome, thy presence is a view of land, appearing to my shipwreck’d hopes: the witch has rais’d the storm, and her ministers have done their work; you see the vessels are parted.

Mask. I know it; I met Sir *Paul* towing away *Cynthia*: come, trouble not your head, I’ll join you together, ere to-morrow morning, or drown between you in the attempt.

Mel. There’s comfort in a hand stretch’d out, to one that’s sinking; tho’ ne’er so far off.

Mask. No sinking, nor no danger,—Come, cheer up; why you don’t know, that while I plead for you, your aunt has given me a retaining fee;—Nay, I am your greatest enemy, and she does but journey-work under me.

Mel. Ha! How’s this?

Mask. What d’ye think of my being employ’d in the execution of all her plots? Ha, ha, ha! nay it’s true; I have undertaken to break the match, I have undertaken to make your uncle disinheret you, to get you turn’d out of doors; and to—Ha, ha, ha! I can’t tell you for laughing,——O she has open’d her heart to me,—I am to turn you a grazing, and to—Ha, ha, ha! marry *Cynthia* myself; there’s a plot for you.

Mel. Ha! O I see, I see my rising sun! Light breaks thro’ clouds upon me, and I shall live in day—O my *Maskwell*! How shall I thank or praise thee: thou hast outwitted woman.—But tell me, how could’st thou thus get into her confidence?—Ha! how? But was it her contrivance to persuade my Lady *Plyant* to this extravagant belief?

Mask. It was, and to tell you the truth I encourag’d it for your diversion: tho’ it made you a little uneasy

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for the present, yet the reflexion of it must needs be entertaining.—I warrant she was very violent at first.

Mel. Ha, ha, ha! ay, a very fury; but I was most afraid of her violence at last,—‘If you had not come as you did, I don’t know what she might have attempted.’

Mask. Ha, ha, ha! I know her temper.—Well, you must know then, that all my contrivances were but bubbles; ’till at last I pretended to have been long secretly in love with *Cynthia*; that did my business; that convinc’d your aunt, I might be trusted; since it was as much my interest as hers to break the match: then, she thought my jealousy might qualify me to assist her in her revenge. And, in short, in that belief, told me the secrets of her heart. At length we made this agreement, if I accomplish her designs (as I told you before) she has engag’d to put *Cynthia* with all her fortune into my power.

Mel. She is most gracious in her favour,—Well, and dear *Jack*, how hast thou contrived?

Mask. I would not have you stay to hear it now; for I don’t know, but she may come this way; I am to meet her anon; after that, I’ll tell you the whole matter; be here in this gallery an hour hence, by that time I imagine our consultation may be over.

Mel. I will, ’till then success attend thee. [Exit.

Mask. ’Till then success will attend me; for when I meet you, I meet the only obstacle to my fortune. *Cynthia* let thy beauty gild my crimes; and whatsoever I commit of treachery or deceit, shall be imputed to me as a merit—Treachery, what treachery? Love cancels all the bonds of friendship, and sets men right upon their first foundations.

Duty to kings, piety to parents, gratitude to benefactors, and fidelity to friends, are different and particular ties: but the name of rival cuts ’em all asunder, and is a general acquittance—Rival is equal, and love like death an universal leveller of mankind. Ha! But is there not such a thing as honesty? Yes, and whosoever has it about him, bears an enemy in his breast: for your honest man, as I take it, is that nice, scrupulous, conscientious person, who will cheat no body but himself; such
another

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another coxcomb, as your wife man, who is too hard for all the world, and will be made a fool of by nobody, but himself: ha, ha, ha! Well for wisdom and honesty, give me cunning and hypocrisy; oh, 'tis such a pleasure, to angle for fair-fac'd fools! Then that hungry gudgeon credulity will bite at any thing—Why, let me see, I have the same face, the same words and accents, when I speak what I do think; and when I speak what I do not think—the very same—and dear dissimulation is the only art, not to be known from nature.

*Why will mankind be fools, and be deceiv'd?
And why are friends and lovers oaths believ'd?
When, each, who searches strictly his own mind,
May so much fraud and power of baseness find.* [Exit.

A C T III.

Enter Lord Touchwood and Lady Touchwood.

L. T. **M**Y lord, can you blame my brother *Plyant*, if he refuses his daughter upon this provocation? The contract's void by this unheard of impiety.

Ld. T. I don't believe it true; he has better principles—Pho, 'tis nonsense. Come, come, I know my Lady *Plyant* 'has a large eye, and wou'd centre every 'thing in her own circle;' 'tis not the first time she has mistaken respect for love, and made Sir *Paul* jealous of the civility of an undesigning person, the better to bespeak his security in her unfeigned pleasures.

L. T. You censure hardly, my lord; my sister's honour is very well known.

Ld. T. Yes, I believe I know some that have been familiarly acquainted with it. This is a little trick wrought by some pityful contriver, envious of my nephew's merit.

L. T. Nay, my lord, it may be so, and I hope it will be found so: but that will require some time; for in such a case as this, demonstration is necessary.

B 2

Ld. T.

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Ld. T. There should have been demonstration of the contrary too, before it had been believ'd——

L. T. So I suppose there was.

Ld. T. How? where? when?

L. T. That I can't tell; nay I don't say there was—I am willing to believe as favourably of my nephew as I can.

Ld. T. I don't know that.

[*Half aside.*]

L. T. How? Don't you believe that, say you, my lord?

Ld. T. No, I don't say so—I confess I am troubled to find you so cold in his defence.

L. T. His defence! bless me, would you have me defend an ill thing.

Ld. T. You believe it then?

L. T. I don't know; I am very unwilling to speak my thoughts in any thing that may be to my cousin's disadvantage; besides, I find, my lord, you are prepared to receive an ill impression from any opinion of mine which is not consenting with your own: but since I am like to be suspected in the end, and 'tis a pain any longer to dissemble, I own it to you; in short I do believe it, nay, and can believe any thing worse, if it were laid to his charge—Don't ask me my reasons, my lord, for they are not fit to be told you.

Ld. T. I'm amaz'd, here must be something more than ordinary in this, [*Aside.*] Not fit to be told me, madam? You can have no interests, wherein I am not concern'd, and consequently the same reasons ought to be convincing to me, which create your satisfaction or disquiet.

L. T. But those which cause my disquiet, I am willing to have remote from your hearing. Good my lord, don't press me.

Ld. T. Don't oblige me to press you.

L. T. Whatever it was, 'tis past: and that is better to be unknown which cannot be prevented; therefore let me beg you to rest satisfy'd——

Ld. T. When you have told me, I will——

L. T. You won't.

Ld. T. By my life, my dear, I will.

L. T.

L. T. What if you can't?

Ld. T. How? Then I must know, nay I will: no more trifling—I charge you tell me—By all our mutual peace to come; upon your duty——

L. T. Nay, my lord, you need say no more, to make me lay my heart before you, but don't be thus transported; compose yourself: it is not of concern, to make you lose one minute's temper. 'Tis not indeed, my dear. Nay, by this kiss you shan't be angry. O lord, I wish I had not told you any thing.—Indeed, my lord, you have frighted me. Nay, look pleas'd, I'll tell you.

Ld. T. Well, well.

L. T. Nay, but will you be calm—indeed it's nothing but——

Ld. T. But what?

L. T. But will you promise me not to be angry—Nay you must—Not to be angry with *Mellefont*—I dare swear he's sorry—and were it to do again, would not——

Ld. T. Sorry, for what? 'Death, you rack me with delay.

L. T. Nay, no great matter, only—Well I have your promise,—Pho, why nothing, only your nephew had a mind to amuse himself, sometimes with a little gallantry towards me. Nay, I can't think he meant any thing seriously, but me thought it look'd oddly.

Ld. T. Confusion and hell, what do I hear!

L. T. Or, may be, he thought he was not enough akin to me, upon your account, and had a mind to create a nearer relation on his own; a lover you know, my lord—Ha, ha, ha! Well but that's all—Now you have it; well remember your promise, my lord, and don't take any notice of it to him.

Ld. T. No, no, no—'Damnation!'

L. T. Nay, I swear you must not—A little harmless mirth—Only misplac'd, that's all—But if it were more, 'tis over now, and all's well. For my part, I have forgot it; and so has he, I hope—for I have not heard any thing from him these two days.

Ld. T. These two days! Is it so fresh? Unnatural villain! 'Death, I'll have him stripp'd and turn'd naked

out of my doors, this moment, and let him rot and perish incestuous brute!

L. T. O for heav'n's sake, my lord, you'll ruin me if you take such public notice of it, it will be a town-talk: consider your own and my honour—nay, I told you you would not be satisfied when you knew it.

Ld. T. Before I've done, I will be satisfy'd. Ungrateful monster, how long?—

L. T. Lord, I don't know: I wish my lips had grown together when I told you—Almost a twelvemonth—Nay, I won't tell you any more, 'till you are yourself. Pray, my lord, don't let the company see you in this disorder—Yet, I confess, I can't blame you; for I think I was never so surpriz'd in my life—Who would have thought my nephew could have so misconstrued my kindness—But will you go into your closet, and recover your temper. I'll make an excuse of sudden business to the company, and come to you. Pray, good dear my lord, let me beg you do now: I'll come immediately, and tell you all; will you, my lord?

Ld. T. I will—I am mute with wonder.

L. T. Well, but go now, here's some body coming.

Ld. T. Well, I go—You won't stay, for I would hear more of this. [Exit,

L. T. I follow instantly.—So.

Enter Maskwell.

Mask. This was a master-piece, and did not need my help—the' I stood ready for a cue to come in and confirm all, had there been occasion.

L. T. Have you seen *Mellefont*?

Mask. I have; and am to meet him here about this time.

L. T. How does he bear his disappointment?

Mask. Secure in my assistance, he seem'd not much afflicted, but rather laugh'd at the shallow artifice, which so little time must of necessity discover. Yet he is apprehensive of some farther design of yours, and has engaged me to watch you. I believe he will hardly be able to prevent your plot, yet I would have you use caution and expedition.

L. T. Expedition indeed; for all we do, must be perform'd in the remaining part of this evening, and before the

the company break up; lest my lord should cool, and have an opportunity to talk with him privately—My lord must not see him again.

Mask. By no means, therefore you must aggravate my lord's displeasure to a degree that will admit of no conference with him.—What think you of mentioning me?

L. T. How?

Mask. To my lord, as having been privy to *Mellefont's* design upon you, but still using my utmost endeavours to dissuade him: tho' my friendship and love to him has made me conceal it; yet you may say, I threatened the next time he attempted any thing of that kind, to discover it to my lord.

L. T. To what end is this?

Mask. It will confirm my lord's opinion of my honour and honesty, and create in him a new confidence in me, which (should this design miscarry) will be necessary to the forming another plot that I have in my head—To cheat you, as well as the rest [Aside.

L. T. I'll do it—I'll tell him you hindred him 'once from forcing me.'

Mask. 'Excellent! Your ladyship has a most improving fancy.' You had best go to my lord, keep him as long as you can in his closet, and I doubt not but you will mould him to what you please; your guests are so engaged in their own follies and intrigues, they'll miss neither of you.

L. T. When shall we meet?—At eight this evening in my chamber, there rejoice at our success, 'and toy away an hour in mirth.'

Mask. I will not fail.

[Exit. Lady Touch.

So far all's well, 'yet I know what she means by toying away an hour well enough. Pox I have lost all appetite to her; yet she's a fine woman, and I lov'd her once. But I don't know, since I have been in a great measure kept by her, the case is alter'd; what was my pleasure is become my duty: and I have as little stomach to her now as if I were her husband.' Should she smother my design upon *Cynthia*, I were in a

fine pickle. She has a 'damn'd' penetrating head, and knows how to interpret a coldness the right way; therefore I must dissemble 'ardour and ecstacy, that's 'resolv'd: how easily and pleasantly is that dissembled 'before fruition! Pox on't that a man can't drink without quenching his thirst.' Ha! yonder comes *Mellefont* thoughtful. Let me think: meet her at eight—hum—ha! By Heav'n I have it—If I can speak to my lord before—Was it my brain or providence? No matter which—I will deceive 'em all, and yet secure myself, 'twas a lucky thought! Well, this double-dealing is a jewel. Here he comes, now for me.——

[*Maskwell pretending not to see him, walks by him, and speaks as it were to himself.*

Enter Mellefont musing.

Mask. Mercy on us, what will the wickedness of this world come to?

Mel. How now, *Jack*? What, so full of contemplation that you run over!

Mask. I'm glad you're come, for I could not contain myself any longer: and was just going to give vent to a secret, which no body but you ought to drink down.—Your aunt's just gone from hence.

Mel. And having trusted thee with the secrets of her soul, thou art villainously bent to discover 'em all to me, ha?

Mask. I'm afraid my frailty leans that way——But I don't know whether I can in honour discover 'em all.

Mel. All, all man, what you may in honour betray her as far as she betrays herself. No tragical design upon my person, I hope.

Mask. No, but it's a comical design upon mine.

Mel. What dost thou mean?

Mask. Listen and be dumb, we have been bargaining about the rate of your ruin——

Mel. Like any two guardians to an orphan heiress—Well.

Mask. And whereas pleasure is generally paid with mischief, what mischief I do is to be paid with pleasure.

Mel. So when you've swallowed the potion, you sweeten your mouth with a plumb.

Mask.

Mask. You are merry, fir, but I shall probe your constitution. In short, the price of your banishment is to be paid with the person of——

Mel. Of *Cynthia*, and her fortune—Why you forget you told me this before.

Mask. No, no—So far you are right; and I am, as an earnest of that bargain, to have full and free possession of the person of——your aunt.

Mel. Ha!——Pho, you trifle.

Mask. By this light, I'm serious; all raillery apart—I knew 'twould stun you: this evening at eight she will receive me in her bed-chamber.

Mel. Hell and the devil, is she abandon'd of all grace—Why the woman is possess'd——

Mask. Well, will you go in my stead?

Mel. 'By Heav'n' into a hot furnace sooner.

Mask. No, you would not—It would not be so convenient, as I can order matters.

Mel. What d'ye mean!

Mask. Mean? Not to disappoint the lady I assure you—Ha, ha, ha! how gravely he looks—Come, come, I won't perplex you. 'Tis the only thing that fortune could have contriv'd to make me capable of serving you, either to my inclination or your own necessity.

Mel. How, how, for Heav'n's sake, dear *Mask-well*?

Mask. Why thus—I'll go according to appointment; you shall have notice at the critical minute to come and surprize your aunt and me together: counterfeit a rage against me, and I'll make my escape through the private passage from her chamber, which I'll take care to leave open: 'Twill be hard, if then you can't bring her to any conditions. For this discovery will disarm her of all defence, and leave her entirely at your mercy: nay, she must ever after be in awe of you.

Mel. Let me adore thee, my better *genius*! by Heav'n I think it is not in the power of fate to disappoint my hopes—My hopes, my certainty!

Mask. Well, I'll meet you here, within a quarter of eight, and give you notice. [Exit.

Mel. Good fortune ever go along with thee!

Enter Careless.

Care. *Mellefont*, get out o' th' way, my lady *Plyant's* coming, and I shall never succeed while thou art in fight—Tho' she begins to tack about; but I made love a great while to no purpose.

Mel. Why, what's the matter? She's convinc'd that I don't care for her.

Care. I can't get an answer from her, that does not begin with her honour, or her virtue, 'her religion,' or some such cant. Then she has told me the whole history of Sir *Paul's* nine years courtship; how he has lain for whole nights together upon the stairs, before her chamber-door; and that the first favour he received from her, was a piece of an old scarlet petticoat for a stomacher; which since the day of his marriage, he has, out of a piece of gallantry, converted into a night-cap, and wears it still with much solemnity on his anniversary wedding-night.

Mel. That I have seen, with the ceremony thereunto belonging—For on that night he creeps in at the bed's feet like a gull'd *Bassa* that has marry'd a relation of the *Grand Signior*, and that night he has his arms at liberty. Did not she tell you at what a distance she keeps him? He has confess'd to me that but at some certain times, that is I suppose when she apprehends being with child, he never has the privilege of using the familiarity of a husband with a wife. He was once given to scrambling with his hands, and sprawling in his sleep; and ever since she has him swaddled up in blankets, and his hands and feet swath'd down, and so put to bed; and there he lies with a great beard, like a *Russian* bear upon a drift of snow. You are very great with him, I wonder he never told you his grievances, he will I warrant you.

Care. Excessively foolish!—But that which gives me most hopes of her, is her telling me of the many temptations she has resisted.

Mel. Nay, then you have her; for a woman's bragging to a man that she has overcome temptations, is an argument that they were weakly offer'd, and a challenge

to him to engage her more irresistibly. ' 'Tis only an
 ' enhancing the price of the commodity, by telling you
 ' how many customers have underbid her.

' *Carl.* Nay, I don't despair—But still she has a grudge-
 ' ing to you—I talk'd to her t'other night at my lord
 ' *Froth's* masquerade, when I'm satisfy'd she knew me,
 ' and I had no reason to complain of my reception; but
 ' I find women are not the same bare-faced and in
 ' masks,—and a vizor disguises their inclinations as
 ' much as their faces.

' *Mel.* 'Tis a mistake, for women may most properly
 ' be said to be unmask'd when they wear vizors; for that
 ' secures them from blushing, and being out of coun-
 ' tenance, and next to being in the dark, or alone, they
 ' are most truly themselves in a vizor mask.' Here they
 come, I'll leave you. Ply her close, and by and by clap
 a *billet-doux* into her hand: for a woman never thinks a
 man truly in love with her, 'till he has been fool enough
 to think of her out of her sight, and to lose so much time
 as to write to her. [Exit.

Enter Sir Paul and Lady Plyant.

Sir Paul. Shan't we disturb your meditation, Mr. *Care-
 less*. You wou'd be private?

Care. You bring that along with you, *Sir Paul*, that
 shall be always welcome to my privacy.

Sir Paul. O, sweet Sir, you load your humble servants,
 both me and my wife, with continual favours.

L. P. *Sir Paul*, what a phrase was there? You will be
 making answers, and taking that upon you, which ought
 to lie upon me: that you should have so little breeding
 to think Mr. *Careless* did not apply himself to me. Pray
 what have you to entertain any bodies privacy? I swear
 and declare in the face of the world I'm ready to blush
 for your ignorance.

Sir Paul. I acquiesce, my lady; but don't snub so loud.

[*Aside to her.*

L. P. Mr. *Careless*, if a person that is wholly illiterate
 might be supposed to be capable of being qualify'd to
 make a suitable return to those obligations which you
 are pleased to confer upon one that is wholly incapable

of being qualify'd in all those circumstances, I'm sure I shou'd rather attempt it than any thing in the world, [*Courtesies.*] for I'm sure there's nothing in the world that I would rather. [*Courtesies*] But I know Mr. *Careless* is so great a critick and so fine a gentleman, that it is impossible for me.——

Care. O Heav'ns! Madam, you confound me.

Sir Paul. Gads-bud, she's a fine person——

L. P. O lord! Sir, pardon me, we women have not those advantages: I know my own imperfections—But at the same time you must give me leave to declare in the face of the world, that no body is more sensible of favours and things; for with the reserve of my honour, I assure you, Mr. *Careless*, I don't know any thing in the world I would refuse to a person so meritorious—— You'll pardon my want of expression.——

Care. O your ladyship is abounding in all excellence, particularly that of phrase.

L. P. You are so obliging, sir.

Care. Your ladyship is so charming.

Sir Paul. So, now, now; now, my lady.

L. P. So well bred.

Care. So surprizing.

L. P. So well dress'd, so *bonne mine*, so eloquent, so unaffected, so easy, so free, so particular, so agreeable——

Sir Paul. Ay, so, so, there.

Care. O lord, I beseech you, madam, don't——

L. P. So gay, so graceful, so good teeth, so fine shape, so fine limbs, so fine linen, and I don't doubt but you have a very good skin, sir.

Care. For Heav'n's sake, madam——I'm quite out of countenance.

Sir Paul. And my lady's quite out of breath; or else you should hear—Gad's-bub, you may talk of my lady *Froth*.

Care. O fy, fy, not to be named of a day—My lady *Froth* is very well in her accomplishments—But it is when my Lady *Plyant* is not thought of——If that can ever be.

L. P. O you overcome me—That is so excessive.

Sir Paul. Nay, I swear and vow that was pretty.

Care. O *Sir Paul*, you are the happiest man alive. Such a lady! that is the envy of her own sex, and the admiration of ours.

Sir Paul. Your humble servant, I am, I thank Heav'n, in a fine way of living, as I may say, peacefully and happily, and I think need not envy any of my neighbours, blessed be Providence—Ay, truly, *Mr. Careless*, my lady is a great blessing, a fine, discreet, well-spoken woman as you shall see—If it becomes me to say so; and we live very comfortably together; she is a little hasty sometimes, and so am I; but mine's soon over, and then I'm so sorry—O *Mr. Careless*, if it were not for one thing—

Enter Boy with a letter, and offers it to Sir Paul.

L. P. How often have you been told of that, you jack-anapes?

Sir Paul. Gad so, gad's-bud—*Tim.* carry it to my lady, you should have carry'd it to my lady first.

Boy. 'Tis directed to your worship.

Sir Paul. Well, my lady reads all letters first.—Child, do so no more; d'ye hear, *Tim.*

Boy. No, and please you.

[*Exit.*

Sir Paul. A humour of my wife's, you know women have little fancies—But as I was telling you, *Mr. Careless*, if it were not for one thing, I should think myself the happiest man in the world; indeed that touches me near, very near.

Care. What can that be, *Sir Paul*?

Sir Paul. Why, I have, I thank Heav'n, a very plentiful fortune, a good estate in the country, some houses in town, and some money, a pretty tolerable personal estate; and it is a great grief to me, indeed it is, *Mr. Careless* that I have not a son to inherit this.—'Tis true, I have a daughter, and a fine dutiful child she is, though I say it, blessed be Providence I may say; for indeed, *Mr. Careless*, I am mightily beholden to Providence—A poor unworthy sinner—But if I had a son, ah, that's my affliction, and my only affliction; indeed I cannot refrain tears when it comes in my mind.

[*Cries.*
Care.

Care. why, methinks that might be easily remedied—my lady's a fine likely woman——

Sir Paul. Oh, a fine likely woman—as you shall see in a summer's day—Indeed she is, Mr. *Careless*, in all respects.

Care. And I should not have taken you to have been so old——

Sir Paul. Alas, that's not it, Mr. *Careless*; ah! that's not it; no, no, you shoot wide of the mark a mile; indeed you do, that's not it, Mr. *Careless*; no, no, that's not it.

Care. No, what can be the matter then?

Sir Paul. You'll scarcely believe me, when I shall tell you—my lady is so nice——It's very strange, but it's true: too true—she's so very nice, that I don't believe she would touch a man for the world——At least not above once a year; I'm sure I have found it so; and alas, what's once a year to an old man, who would do good in his generation? Indeed it's true, Mr. *Careless*, it breaks my heart—I am her husband, as I may say; though far unworthy of that honour, yet I am her husband; but alas-a-day, I have no more familiarity with her person—as to that matter——than with my own mother——no indeed.

Care. Alas-a-day, this is a lamentable story; my lady must be told on't; she must i'faith, Sir *Paul*; 'tis an injury to the world.

Sir Paul. Ah! would to Heav'n you would, Mr. *Careless*; you are mightily in her favour.

Care. I warrant you, what we must have a son some way or other.

Sir Paul. Indeed, I should be mightily bound to you, if you could bring it about, Mr. *Careless*.

L. P. Here, Sir *Paul*, it's from your Steward, here's a return of 600 pounds; you may take fifty of it for the next half year.

[*Gives him the letter.*]

Enter Lord Froth, and Cynthia.

Sir Paul. how does my girl? come hither to thy father, poor lamb, thou'rt melancholick,

Ld. Froth. Heav'n, Sir *Paul*, you amaze me of all things in the world—you are never pleas'd but when we
are

are all upon the broad grin ; all laugh and no company ; ah, then 'tis such a sight to see some teeth—sure you're a great admirer of my lady *Whifler*, Mr. *Sneer*, and Sir *Laurence Loud*, and that gang.

Sir Paul. I vow and swear she's a very merry woman, but I think she laughs a little too much.

Ld. Froth. Merry ! O Lord, what a character that is of a woman of quality—you have been at my lady *Whifler's* upon her day, madam ;

Cynt. Yes, my Lord—I must humour this fool. [*Aside*.

Ld. Froth. Well and how ? hee ! what is your sense of the conversation ?

Cynt. O most ridiculous, a perpetual consort of laughing without any harmony ; for sure, my Lord, to laugh out of time, is as disagreeable as to sing out of time or out of tune.

Ld. Froth. Hee, hee, hee, right ! and then, my lady *Whifler* is so ready—she always comes in three bars too soon—and then, what do they laugh at ? for you know laughing without a jest is as impertinent ; hee ! as, as—

Cynt. As dancing without a fiddle.

Ld. Froth. Just i' faith, that was at my tongue's end.

Cynt. But that cannot be properly said of them, for I think they are all in good nature with the world, and only laugh at one another, and you must allow they have all jests in their persons, though they have none in their conversation.

Ld. Froth. True, as I'm a person of honour—for Heav'n's sake let us sacrifice 'em to mirth a little.

Enter Boy and whispers Sir Paul.

Sir Paul. Gads so—wife, wife, my lady *Plyant*, I have a word.

L. P. I'm busy, *Sir Paul*, I wonder at your impertinence——

Care. *Sir Paul*, harkee, I'm reasoning the matter you know ; madam,—if your ladyship please, we'll discourse of this in the next room.

[*Exeunt Careless and Lady Plyant*.

Sir Paul. O ho, I wish you good success, I wish you good success. Boy, tell my lady, when she has done, I would speak with her below.

[*Exit*.
Enter

Enter Lady Froth and Brisk.

L. Froth. Then you think that *episode* between Susan, the dairy-maid, and our coach-man is not amiss; you know, I may suppose the dairy in town, as well as in the country.

Brisk. Incomparable, let me perish—but then being an heroick poem, had not you better call him a *Charioteer*? *Charioteer* sounds great; besides your ladyship's coachman having a red face, and you comparing him to the fun—and you know the fun is call'd *Heav'n's Charioteer*.

L. Froth. Oh, infinitely better; I'm extremely beholden to you for the hint; stay, we'll read over those half a score lines again. [*Pulls out a paper.*] Let me see here, you know what goes before—the comparison, you know. [*Reads*]

*For as the sun shines ev'ry day,
So of our coachman I may say.*

Brisk. I'm afraid that simile won't do in wet weather—because you say the sun shines ev'ry day.

L. Froth. No, for the sun it won't, but it will do for the coach-man, for you know their's most occasion for a coach in wet weather.

Brisk. Right, right, that saves all.

L. Froth. Then I don't say the sun shines all the day, but that he peeps now and then, yet he does shine all the day too, you know, tho' we don't see him.

Brisk. Right, but the vulgar will never comprehend that.

L. Froth. Well, you shall hear—let me see.

[*Reads*] *For as the sun shines ev'ry day,*

So, of our coach-man I may say,

He shews his drunken fiery face,

Just as the sun does more or less.

Brisk. That's right, all's well, all's well. *More or less.*

L. Froth [*reads*] *And when at night his labour's done,*

Then too, like Heav'n's Charioteer the sun:

Ay, *Charioteer* does better.

Into the dairy he descends,

And there his whipping and his driving ends;

There

There he's secure from danger of a bilk.

His fare is paid him, and he sets in milk.

For Susan, you know, is *Thetis*, and so——

Brisk. Incomparable well and proper, I'gad——But I have one exception to make——Don't you think *bilk* (I know its good rhyme) but don't you think *bilk* and *fare* too like a hackney coachman?

L. Froth. I swear and vow I'm afraid so——And yet our *Jebu* was a hackney-coachman, when my lord took him.

Brisk. Was he? I'm answer'd, if *Jebu* was a hackney coachman——You may put that in the marginal notes tho', to prevent criticism——Only mark it with a small alterism, and say,——*Jebu* was formerly a hackney coachman.

L. Froth. I will; you'd oblige me extremely to write notes to the whole poem.

Brisk. With all my heart and soul, and proud of the vast honour, let me perish.

Ld. Froth. Hee, hee, hee! my dear have you done——won't you join with us, we were laughing at my lady *Whifler*, and Mr. *Sneer*.

L. Froth.——Ay my dear——Were you? O filthy Mr. *Sneer*; he's a nauseous figure, a most fulsamick fop, foh——He spent two days together in going about *Covent-garden* to suit the lining of his coach with his complexion.

Ld. Froth. O silly! yet his aunt is as fond of him, as if she had brought the ape into the world herself.

Brisk. Who, my Lady *Toothless*; Oh, she's a mortifying spectacle; she's always chewing the cud like an old ewe.

Cynt. Fy, Mr. *Brisk*, *Eringo*'s for her cough.

L. Froth. I have seen her take 'em half chew'd out of her mouth, to laugh, and then put 'em in again——Foh.

Ld. Froth. Foh.

L. Froth. Then she's always ready to laugh when *Sneer* offers to speak——And sits in expectation of his no jest, with her gums bare, and her mouth open——

Brisk. Like an oyster at low ebb, I'gad——Ha, ha, ha!

Cynt. [*Aside.*] Well, I find there are no fools so inconsiderable

siderable in themselves, but they can render other people contemptible by exposing their infirmities.

L. Froth. Then that t'other great strapping lady—I can't hit of her name; the old fat fool that paints so exorbitantly.

Brisk. I know whom you mean——But deuce take me I can't hit of her name neither—Paints, d'ye say? Why she lays it on with a trowel——Then she has a great beard that bristles through it, and makes her look as if she were plaister'd with lime and hair, let me perish.

L. Froth. Oh you made a song upon her, Mr. *Brisk*.

Brisk. He? egad, so I did——My Lord can sing it.

Cynt. O good my Lord let's hear it.

Brisk. 'Tis not a song neither——Its a sort of an epigram, or rather an epigrammatick sonnet; I don't know what to call it, but it's satire.——Sing it, my Lord.

Lord Froth sings.

Ancient Phillis has young graces,

'Tis a strange thing but a true one;

Shall I tell you how?

She herself makes her own faces,

And each morning wears a new one;

Where's the wonder now?

Brisk. Short, but there's salt in't; my way of writing, I'gad.'

Enter Footman.

L. Froth. How now?

Foot. Your ladyship's chair is come.

L. Froth. Is nurse and the child in it?

Foot. Yes, madam.

L. Froth. O the dear creature! let's go see it.

Ld. Froth. I swear, my dear, you'll spoil that child, with sending it to and again so often, this is the seventh time the chair has gone for her to day.

L. Froth. O-law, I swear its but the sixth—and I han't seen her these two hours——The poor dear creature——I swear, my lord, you don't love poor little *Sapho*,——Come, my dear *Cynthia*, Mr. *Brisk*, we'll go see *Sapho*, tho' my Lord won't.

Cynt.

Cynt. I'll wait upon your ladyship.

Brisk. Pray, madam, how old is Lady *Sapho*?

L. Froth. Three quarters, but I swear she has a world of wit, and can sing a tune already. My Lord, won't you go? Won't you? What not to see *Saph*? Pray, my Lord, come see little *Saph*. I knew you cou'd not stay.

[*Exit. Ld. Froth, L. Froth and Brisk.*]

Cynt. 'Tis not so hard to counterfeit joy in the depth of affliction, as to dissemble mirth in company of fools — Why should I call 'em fools? The world thinks better of 'em; for these have quality and education, wit and fine conversation, are receiv'd and admir'd by the world — If not, they like and admire themselves — And why is not that true wisdom, for 'tis happiness: And for ought I know, we have misapply'd the name all this while, and mistaken the thing: Since

' If happiness in self-content is plac'd,

' The wise are wretched, and fools only bless'd.' [*Exit.*]

ACT IV.

Enter Mellefont and Cynthia.

Cynt. I Heard him loud as I came by the closet door, and my lady with him, but she seem'd to moderate his passion.

Mel. Ay, 'hell thank her,' as gentle breezes moderate a fire; but I shall counter-work her spells, 'and ride the witch in her own bridle.'

Cynt. It's impossible; she'll cast beyond you still — I'll lay my life it will never be a match.

Mel. What?

Cynt. Between you and me.

Mel. Why so?

Cynt. My mind gives me it won't — because we are both willing; we each of us strive to reach the goal, and

‘and hinder one another in the race; I swear it never does
 ‘well when the parties are so agreed—For when people
 ‘walk hand in hand, there’s neither overtaking nor meet-
 ‘ing: we hunt in couples where we both pursue the
 ‘same game, but forget one another; and ’tis because
 ‘we are so near that we don’t think of coming together.

‘*Mel.* Hum, ’gad I believe there’s something in’t;—
 ‘marriage is the game that we hunt, and while we think
 ‘that we only have it in view, I don’t see but we have it
 ‘in our power.

‘*Cynt.* Within reach; for example, give me your hand;
 ‘you have look’d thro’ the wrong end of the perspec-
 ‘tive all this while; for nothing has been between us
 ‘but our fears,’

Mel. I don’t know why we should not steal out of the
 house this very moment and marry one another, with-
 out consideration or the fear of repentance. Plague
 o’fortune, portion, settlements and jointures.

Cynt. Ay, ay, what have we to do with ’em; you
 know we marry for love.

Mel. Love, love, down-right very villainous love.

Cynt. ‘And he that can’t live upon love, deserves to
 ‘die in a ditch.’—Here then, I give you my promise, in
 spite of duty, any temptation of wealth, your incon-
 stancy, or my own inclination to change——

Mel. To run most wilfully and unreasonably away
 with me this moment, and be married.

Cynt. Hold——Never to marry any body else.

Mel. That’s but a kind of negative consent——Why,
 yon won’t balk the frolick?

Cynt. If you had not been so assured of your own con-
 duct I would not——But ’tis but reasonable that since I
 consent to like a man without the vile consideration of
 money, he should give a very evident demonstration of
 his wit: therefore let me see you undermine my
 Lady Touchwood, as you boasted, and force her to give
 her consent, and then——

Mel. I’ll do’t.

Cynt. And I’ll do’t.

Mel. This very next ensuing hour of eight a clock, is
 the

the last minute of her reign, unless the devil assist her in *propria persona*.

Cynt. Well, if the devil should assist her, and your plot miscarry.——

Mel. Ay, what am I to trust to then?

Cynt. Why if you give me very clear demonstration that it was the devil, I'll allow for irresistible odds. But if I find it to be only chance, or destiny, or unlucky stars, or any thing but the very devil, I'm inexorable: only still I'll keep my word; and live unmarried for your sake.

Mel. And you won't die one, for your own, so still there's hope.

Cynt. Here's my mother-in-law, and your friend *Careless*, I would not have 'em see us together yet. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter Careless and Lady Plyant.

L. P. I swear, Mr. *Careless*, you are very alluring—And say so many fine things, and nothing is so moving to me as a fine thing. Well, I must do you this justice, and declare in the face of the world, never any body gain'd so far upon me as yourself; with blushes I must own it, you have shaken, as I may say, the very foundation of my honour——Well, sure if I escape your importunities, I shall value myself as long as I live, I swear.

Care. And despise me.

[*Sighing.*]

L. P. The last of any man in the world, by my purity; now you make me swear—O gratitude forbid, that I should ever be wanting in a respectful acknowledgment of an intire resignation of all my best wishes, for the person and parts of so accomplish'd and so fine a gentleman, whose merit challenges much more, I'm sure, than my illiterate praises can, description——

Care [*In a whining tone.*] Ah Heav'ns, madam, you ruin me with kindness; your charming tongue pursues the victory of your eyes, while at your feet your poor adorer dies.

L. P. Ah! very fine.

Care. [*Still whining.*] Ah why are you so fair, so bewitching fair? O let me grow to the ground here, and
feast

feast upon that hand; O let me press it to my heart, my trembling heart, the nimble movement shall instruct your pulse, and teach it to alarm desire.

[*'Zoons' I'm almost at the end of my cant, if she does not yield quickly.* [*Aside*

L. P. O that's so passionate and fine, I cannot hear it—I am not safe if I stay, and must leave you.

Care. And must you leave me! rather let me languish out a wretched life, and breathe my soul beneath your feet. [*I must say the same thing over again, and can't help it.*

[*Aside.*

L. P. I swear I'm ready to languish too—O my honour! whither is it going? I protest you have given me the palpitation of the heart.

Care. Can you be so cruel.——

L. P. O rise I beseech you, say no more 'till you rise—Why did you kneel so long? I swear I was so transported, I did not see it,——Well, to shew you how far you have gain'd upon me; I assure you if Sir Paul should die, of all mankind there's none I'd sooner make my second choice.

Care. O Heav'n! I can't out-live this night without your favour—I feel my spirits faint, a general dampness over-spreads my face, a cold deadly dew already vents through all my pores, and will to-morrow wash me for ever from your sight, and drown me in my tomb.

L. P. O you have conquer'd, sweet, melting, [moving] fir, you have conquer'd—What heart of marble can refrain to weep, and yield to such sad sayings.—[*Cries.*

Care. I thank Heav'n, they are the saddest that I ever said—Oh! [*I shall never contain laughter.* [*Aside.*

L. P. Oh, I yield myself all up to your uncontrollable embraces—Say, thou dear dying man, when, where, and how.—Ah, there's Sir Paul.

Care. 'Slife, yonder's Sir Paul, but if he were not come, I'm so transported I cannot speak—This note will inform you. [*Gives her a note.*

[*Exit.*

Enter Sir Paul, Plyant and Cynthia.

Sir Paul. Thou art my tender lambkin, and shalt do what thou wilt—But endeavour to forget this *Mellefont*.

Cynt.

Cynt. I would obey you to my power, fir; but if I have not him, I have sworn never to marry.

Sir Paul. Never to marry! Heav'n's forbid: must I neither have sons nor grandsons? Must the family of the *Plyants* be utterly extinct for want of issue male. Oh impiety! but did you swear, did that sweet creature swear! ha? How durst you swear without my consent, ah? gads-bud, who am I?

Cynt. Pray don't be angry, fir, when I swore, I had your consent; and therefore I swore.

Sir Paul. Why then the revoking my consent does annul, or make of none effect your oath: So you may answer it again——The law will allow it.

Cynt. Ay, but my conscience never will.

Sir Paul. Gads-bud no matter for that, conscience and law never go together; you must not expect that.

L. P. Ay, but *Sir Paul*, I conceive if she has sworn, d'ye mark me, if she has once sworn, it is most unchristian, inhuman, and obscene that she shou'd break it.—I'll make up the match again, because *Mr. Careless* said it would oblige him. [*Aside.*]

Sir Paul. Does your ladyship conceive so——Why I was of that opinion once too——Nay if your ladyship conceives so, I'm of that opinion again; but I can neither find my lord nor my lady to know what they intend.

L. P. I'm satisfy'd that my cousin *Mellefont* has been much wrong'd.

Cynt. [*Aside.*] I'm amaz'd to find her of our side, for I'm sure she lov'd him.

L. P. I know my Lady *Touchwood* has no kindness for him; and besides I have been inform'd by *Mr. Careless*, that *Mellefont* had never any thing more than a profound respect——That he has own'd himself to be my admirer 'tis true, but he was never so presumptuous to entertain any dishonourable notions of things; so that if this be made plain——I don't see how my daughter can in conscience, or honour, or any thing in the world——

Sir Paul. Indeed if this be made plain, as my lady your mother says, child——

L. P.

L. P. Plain! I was inform'd of it by Mr. *Careless*—And I assure you Mr. *Careless* is a person—that has a most extraordinary respect and honour for you, Sir *Paul*.

Cynt. [*Aside.*] And for your ladyship too, I believe, or else you had not chang'd sides so soon; now I begin to find it.

Sir *Paul*. I am much obliged to Mr. *Careless* really, he is a person that I have a great value for, not only for that, but because he has a great veneration for your ladyship.

L. P. O las, no indeed, Sir *Paul*, 'tis upon your account.

Sir *Paul*. No I protest and vow, I have no title to his esteem, but in having the honour to appertain in some measure to your ladyship, that's all.

L. P. O law now, I swear and declare, it shan't be so, you're too modest, Sir *Paul*.

Sir *Paul*. It becomes me, when there is any comparison made, between your ladyship and your most obedient obsequious, devoted, and unamour'd adorer Sir *Paul Plyant*.

L. P. O fy, fy, Sir *Paul*, you'll put me out of countenance—Your very obedient and affectionate wife; that's all—And highly honour'd in that title.

Sir *Paul*. Gads-bud I am transported! Give me leave to kiss your ladyship's hand.

Cynt. That my poor father should be so very silly!

[*Aside.*]

L. P. My lip indeed, Sir *Paul*, I swear you shall.

[*He kisses her, and bows very low.*]

Sir *Paul*. I humbly thank your ladyship—I don't know whether I fly on ground, or walk in air—Gads-bud, she was never thus before—Well, I must own myself the most beholden to Mr. *Careless*—As sure as can be this is all his doing,—something that he has said; well, 'tis a rare thing to have an ingenious friend. Well, your ladyship is of opinion that the match may go forward.

L. P. By all means—Mr. *Careless* has satisfy'd me of the matter.

Sir *Paul*. Well, why then, lamb, you may keep your oath

oath, but have a care of making rash vows; come hither to me, and kiss *Papa*.

L. P. I swear and declare, I am in such a twitter to read Mr. *Careless*'s letter, that I can't forbear any longer—But tho' I may read all letters first by prerogative, yet I'll be sure to be unsuspected this time.—Sir Paul.

Sir Paul. Did your ladyship call?

L. P. Nay, not to interrupt you, my dear—Only lend me your letter, which you had from your steward to day: I would look upon the account again; and may be increase your allowance.

Sir Paul. There it is, madam; do you want a pen and ink? [*Bows and gives the letter.*]

L. P. No, no, nothing else, I thank you, Sir Paul—So now I can read my own letter under the cover of his.

[*Aside.*]

Sir Paul. He? And wilt thou bring a grandson at nine months end—He? A brave chopping boy.—I'll settle a thousand pound a year upon the rogue as soon as ever he looks me in the face, I will, gads-bud. “*I hope the young cherub will be like me; I wou'd fain have some resemblance of myself in my posterity—ha—Thy—Shou'dn't you wish he was like his Grand Papa.*” ‘I'm overjoy'd to think I have any of my family that will bring children into the world. For I would fain have some resemblance of myself in my posterity, he *Thy*? Can't you contrive that affair, girl? Do gads-bud, think on thy old father; heh? Make the young rogue as like as you can.’

Cynt. I'm glad to see you so merry, sir.

Sir Paul. Merry, gads-bud I'm serious, I'll give thee 500 l. for every feature of him that resembles me; ah, this eye, this left eye! a thousand pound for this left eye. This has done execution in its time, girl; why thou hast my leer, hussy, just thy father's leer.—Let it be transmitted to the young rogue by the help of imagination; why 'tis the mark of our family *Thy*; our house is distinguish'd by a languishing eye, as the house of *Austria* is by a thick lip.—Ah! when I was of your age, hussy, I would have held fifty to one, I could have drawn

my own picture——Gads-bud, I could have done——
 ‘ not so much as you neither,——but——nay, don’t
 ‘ blush——

‘ *Cynt.* I don’t blush, sir, for I vow I don’t understand——

‘ *Sir Paul.* Pshaw, pshaw, you fib, you baggage, you do
 ‘ understand, and you shall understand; come don’t be so
 ‘ nice, gads-bud, don’t learn after your mother-in-law ^{my}
 ‘ lady here: Marry Heav’n forbid that you should fol-
 ‘ low her example, that would spoil all indeed. Bless us,
 ‘ if you should take a vagary and make a rash resolution
 ‘ on your wedding night, to die a maid, as she did; all
 ‘ were ruin’d, all my hopes lost——My heart would
 ‘ break, and my estate would be left to the wide world,
 ‘ he? I hope you are a better christian than to think of
 ‘ living a nun; he? Answer me?

‘ *Cynt.* I’m all obedience, sir, to your commands.’

L. P. [*Having read the letter.*] O dear Mr. Careless,
 I swear he writes charmingly, and he looks charmingly,
 and he has charm’d me, as much as I have charm’d him;
 and so I’ll tell him in the wardrobe when ’tis dark. O
 crimine! I hope Sir Paul has not seen both letters.
 [*Puts the wrong letter hastily up, and gives him her own.*]
Sir Paul, here’s your letter, to morrow morning I’ll
 settle accounts to your advantage.

“ *Sir Paul.* I humbly thank your ladyship.

“ *L. P.* So now I’ll retire and study a complimentary re-
 “ buke to Mr. Careless for the pathetic tender of his re-
 “ gards, but it shall not be too severe neither.” [Exit.

Enter Brisk.

Brisk. Sir Paul, Gads-bud you’re an uncivil person, let
 me tell you, and all that; and I did not think it had been
 in you.

Sir Paul. O law, what’s the matter now? I hope you
 are not angry Mr. *Brisk*.

Brisk. Deuce take me I believe you intend to marry
 your daughter yourself; you’re always brooding over her
 like an old hen, as if she were not well hatch’d, P’gad,
 he?

Sir Paul. Good strange! Mr. *Brisk* is such a merry fa-
 cetious person, he, he, he! No, no, I have done with
 her, I have done with her now.

Brisk.

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Brisk. The fiddles have stay'd this hour in the hall, and my Lord *Froth* wants a partner; we can never begin without her.

Sir Paul. Go, go, child, go, get you gone and dance and be merry, I'll come and look at you by and by.—Where's my son *Mellefont*?

'*L.P.* I'll send him to them, I know where he is——'

Brisk. *Sir Paul*, will you send *Careless* into the hall if you meet him.

Sir Paul. I will, I will, I'll go and look for him on purpose. [*Exeunt Sir Paul, and Cynthia.*]

Brisk. So now they are all gone, and I have an opportunity to practise.—Ah! My dear Lady *Froth*! She's a most engaging creature; if she were not so fond of that 'damn'd' coxcomby lord of hers; and yet I am forced to allow him wit too, to keep in with him—No matter, she's a woman of parts, and I'gad parts will carry her. She said she would follow me into the gallery—Now to make my approaches—Hem! hem! Ah madam!—— [*Bows.*] Plague on't, why should I disparage my parts by thinking what to say? None but dull rogues *think*; witty men, like rich fellows, are always ready for all expences; while your blockheads, like poor needy scoundrels, are forced to examine their stock, and for^e all the charges of the day. Here she comes, I'll seem not to see her, and try to win her with a new airy invention of my own, hem!

Enter Lady Froth.

[*Brisk sings, walking about*] *I'm sick with love, ha, ha, ha! pr'ythee come cure me.*

I'm sick with, &c.

O ye Pow'rs! O my Lady *Froth*, my Lady *Froth*! My Lady *Froth*! Heigho! Break heart; gods I thank you.

[*Stands musing with his arms a-cross.*]

L. Froth. O Heav'ns, Mr. *Brisk*! What's the matter?

Brisk. My Lady *Froth*! Your ladyship's most humble servant;—The matter, madam? Nothing, madam, nothing at all I'gad. I was fallen into the most agreeable amusement in the whole province of contemplation: that's all—(I'll seem to conceal my passion, and that will look like respect.)

[*Aside.*]

L. Froth,

L. Froth. Bless me, why did you call out upon me so loud?—

Brisk. O Lord I madam? I beseech your ladyship—when?

L. Froth. Just now as I came in, bless me, why don't you know it?

Brisk. Not I, let me perish—But did I! Strange! I confess your ladyship was in my thoughts; and I was in a sort of dream that did in a manner represent a very pleasing object to my imagination, but—but did I indeed?—To see how love and murder will out. But did I really name my Lady *Froth*?

L. Froth. Three times aloud, as I love letters—But did you talk of love? O *Parnassus*! Who would have thought Mr. *Brisk* could have been in love, ha, ha, ha! O Heav'ns! I thought you cou'd have no mistress but the Nine Muses.

Brisk. No more I have I'gad, for I adore 'em all in your ladyship—Let me perish, I don't know whether to be splenetick, or airy upon't; the deuce take me if I can tell whether I am glad or sorry that your ladyship has made the discovery.

L. Froth. O be merry by all means—Prince *Volscius* in love! Ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. O barbarous, to turn me into ridicule! Yet, ha, ha, ha! The deuce take me, I can't help laughing myself, ha, ha, ha! yet 'by Heav'ns' I have a violent passion for your ladyship, seriously.

L. Froth. Seriously? ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Seriously, ha, ha, ha! Gad I have, for all I laugh.

L. Froth. Ha, ha, ha! What d'ye think I laugh at? Ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Me I'gad, ha, ha!

Ld. Froth. No, the deuce take me if I don't laugh at myself; for hang me if I have not a violent passion for Mr. *Brisk*, ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Seriously?

L. Froth. Seriously, ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. That's well enough; let me perish, ha, ha, ha! O miraculous, what a happy discovery! Ay my dear charming Lady *Froth*!

L. Froth.

L. Froth. Oh my adored Mr. Brisk! [Embrace.

Enter Lord Froth.

Ld. Froth. The company are all ready—How now!

Brisk. Zoons, madam, there's my lord [Softly to her.

L. Froth. Take no notice—but observe me—

Now cast off, and meet me at the lower end of the room, and then join hands again; I could teach my lord this dance purely, but I vow, Mr. Brisk, I can't tell how to come so near any other man. Oh here's my lord, now you shall see me do it with him.

[They pretend to practise part of a country dance.

Ld. Froth.—Oh I see there's no harm yet—But I don't like this familiarity. [Aside.

L. Froth.—Shall you and I do our close dance, to shew Mr. Brisk?

Ld. Froth. No, my dear, do it with him.

L. Froth. I'll do it with him, my lord, when you are out of the way.

Brisk. That's good I'gad, that's good, deuce take me I can hardly hold laughing in his face. [Aside.

Ld. Froth. Any other time, my dear, or we'll dance it below.

L. Froth. With all my heart.

Brisk. Come my lord, I'll wait on you—My charming witty angel! [To her.

L. Froth. We shall have whispering time enough, you know, since we are partners. [Exeunt.

Enter Lady Plyant, and Careless

L. P. O Mr. Careless, Mr. Careless, I'm ruin'd, I'm undone!

Care. What's the matter, madam?

L. P. O the unlucky'st accident, I'm afraid I shan't live to tell it you!

Care. Heav'n forbid! What is it?

L. P. I'm in such a fright; the strangest quandary and premunire! I'm all over in an universal agitation, I dare swear every circumstance of me trembles.—O your letter, your letter! By an unfortunate mistake, I have given Sir Paul your letter instead of his own.

Care. That was unlucky.

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L. P. O yonder he comes reading of it, for Heav'n's sake step in here and advise me quickly, before he sees.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Paul with the letter.

Sir Paul.—O Providence, what a conspiracy have I discover'd—But let me see to make an end on't. —[*Reads.*] Hum—*After supper in the wardrobe by the gallery. If Sir Paul should surprize us, I have a commission from him to treat with you about the very matter of fact*—Matter of fact! Very pretty; it seems then I am conducing to my own cuckoldom; why this is the very traiterous position of taking up arms by my authority, against my person! Well, let me see—'Till then I languish in expectation of my adored charmer.

Dying Ned. Careless,

Gads-bud, would that were matter of fact too. Thou Judas Maccabeus, and Iscariot both. O friendship! What art thou but a name? Henceforth let no man that is married take a friend into the bosom of his family! for if he does—O we know what will follow from the example of Sir Paul Plyant, and his bosom friend Ned Careless. O my lady, have I for this been pinion'd night after night for three years past? Have I been swath'd in blankets 'till I have been even depriv'd of motion? Have I approach'd the marriage bed with reverence as to a sacred shrine, 'and deny'd myself the 'enjoyment of lawful and domestick pleasures to preserve its purity, and must I now find it polluted by foreign iniquity?' O my lady Plyant, you were chaste as ice, but you are melted now, and false as water.—But Providence has been constant to me in discovering this conspiracy: still I am beholden to Providence, if it were not for Providence, sure, poor Sir Paul, thy heart would break.

Enter Lady Plyant.

L. P. So, sir, I see you have read the letter—Well now, Sir Paul, what do you think of your friend Careless? Has he been treacherous, or did you give his insolence a licence to make trial of your wife's suspected virtue? D'ye see here? [*Snatches the letter as in anger.*]

Look;

Look, read it? Gad's my life if I thought it were so, I would this moment renounce all communication with you. Ungrateful monster! He? Is it so? Ay, I see it, a plot upon my honour, your guilty cheeks confess it: Oh where shall wrong'd virtue fly for reparation! I'll be divorced this instant.

Sir Paul. Gads-bud what shall I say? This is the strangest surprize! Why I don't know any thing at all, nor I don't know whether there be any thing at all in the world, or no.

L. P. I thought I should try you, false man. I that never dissembled in my life: yet to make trial of you, pretended to like that monster of iniquity, *Careless*, and found out that contrivance to let you see this letter; which now I find was of your own inditing——I do, heathen, I do, see my face no more; I'll be divorced presently.

Sir Paul. O strange, what will become of me!—I'm so amaz'd, and so overjoy'd, so afraid, and so sorry. —But did you give me this letter on purpose, he? Did you?

L. P. Did I? Do you doubt me, Turk, Saracen? I have a cousin that's a proctor in the commons, I'll go to him instantly.——

Sir Paul. Hold, stay, I beseech your ladyship——I'm so overjoy'd, stay, I'll confess all.

L. P. What will you confess, Jew?

Sir Paul. Why now as I hope to be saved, I had no hand in this letter——Nay hear me, I beseech your ladyship: the devil take me now if he did not go beyond my commission——If I desired him to do any more than speak a good word only just for me; gads-bud only for poor *Sir Paul*, I'm an Anabaptist, or a Jew, or what you please to call me.

L. P. Why is not here matter of fact?

Sir Paul. Ay, but by your own virtue and continency that matter of fact is all his own doing—I confess I had a great desire to have some honours conferr'd upon me, which lie all in your ladyship's breast, and he being a well-spoken man, I desired him to intercede for me.——

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L. P. Did you so, presumption! Oh! he comes, the Tarquin comes; I cannot bear his sight. [Exit.

Enter Careless.

Care. Sir Paul, I'm glad I've met with you, 'gad I have said all I could, but can't prevail—Then my friendship to you has carry'd me a little farther in this matter—

Sir Paul. Indeed—Well sir—I'll dissemble with him a little. [Aside.

Care. Why faith I have in my time known honest gentlemen abused by a pretended coyness in their wives, and I had a mind to try my lady's virtue—And when I could not prevail for you, 'gad I pretended to be in love myself—but all in vain, she would not hear a word upon that subject: then I writ a letter to her; I don't know what effects that will have, but I'll be sure to tell you when I do, tho' by this light I believe her virtue is impregnable.

Sir Paul. O Providence! Providence! What discoveries are here made? Why, this is better and more miraculous than the rest.

Care. What do you mean?

Sir Paul. I can't tell you, I'm so overjoy'd; come along with me to my lady, I can't contain myself; come my dear friend.

Care. So, so, so, this difficulty's over. [Aside. [Exit.

Enter Mellefont and Maskwell, from different doors.

Mel. Maskwell! I have been looking for you—'tis within a quarter of eight.

Mask. My lady is just gone into my lord's closet, you had best steal into her chamber before she comes, and lie concealed there, otherwise she may lock the door when we are together, and you not easily get in to surprise us.

Mel. He! You say true.

Mask. You had best make haste, for after she has made some apology to the company for her own, and my lord's absence all this while, she'll retire to her chamber instantly.

Mel.

Mel. I go this moment : now fortune I defy thee.

[*Exit.*]

Mask. I confess you may be allow'd to be secure in your own opinion ; the appearance is very fair, but I have an after-game to play that shall turn the tables, and here comes the man that I must manage.

Enter Lord Touchwood.

Ld. T. Maskwell, you are the man I wish'd to meet.

Mask. I am happy to be in the way of your lordship's commands.

Ld. T. I have always found you prudent and careful in any thing that has concern'd me or my family.

Mask. I were a villain else—I am bound by duty and gratitude, and my own inclination, to be ever your lordship's servant.

Ld. T. Enough—You are my friend ; I know it : yet there has been a thing in your knowledge, which has concern'd me nearly, that you have conceal'd from me.

Mask. My lord !

Ld. T. Nay, I excuse your friendship to my unnatural nephew thus far—But I know you have been privy to his impious designs upon my wife. This ev'ning she has told me all : her good-nature conceal'd it as long as was possible ; but he perseveres so in villainy, that she has told me even you were weary of dissuading him, 'though you have once actually hindered him from forcing her.'

Mask. I am sorry, my lord, I can't make you an answer ; this is an occasion in which I would not willingly be silent.

Ld. T. I know you would excuse him—And I know as well that you can't.

Mask. Indeed I was in hopes it had been a youthful heat that might have soon boil'd over ; but—

Ld. T. Say on.

Mask. I have nothing more to say, my lord—but to express my concern ; for I think his frenzy increases daily.

Ld. T. How ! Give me but proof of it, ocular proof, that

that I may justify my dealing with him to the world, and share my fortunes.

Mask. O my lord! consider that is hard: besides, time may work upon him: then, for me to do it! I have profess'd an everlasting friendship to him.

Ld. T. He is your friend, and what am I?

Mask. I am answered.

Ld. T. Fear not his displeasure; I will put you out of his, and fortune's power, and for that thou art scrupulously honest, I will secure thy fidelity to him, and give my honour never to own any discovery that you shall make me. Can you give me a demonstrative proof? speak.

Mask. I wish I could not——To be plain, my lord, I intended this ev'ning to have try'd all arguments to dissuade him from a design, which I suspect; and if I had not succeeded, to have informed your lordship of what I knew.

Ld. T. I thank you. What is the villain's purpose?

Mask. He has own'd nothing to me of late, and what I mean now, is only a bare suspicion of my own. If your lordship will meet me a quarter of an hour hence there, in that lobby by my lady's bed-chamber, I shall be able to tell you more.

Ld. T. I will.

Mask. My duty to your lordship makes me do a severe piece of justice——

Ld. T. I will be secret, and reward your honesty beyond your hopes. [Exit.]

SCENE opening, shews Lady Touchwood's Chamber.

Mellefont Solus.

Pray Heav'n my aunt keep touch with her affigation.——Oh that her lord were but sweating behind this hanging, with the expectation of what I shall see——Hist, she comes——Little does she think what a mine is just ready to spring under her feet. But to my post.

[Goes behind the hangings.]

Enter Lady Touchwood.

L. T. 'Tis eight o'clock! methinks I should have found him here. Who does not prevent the hour of love,

love, out-stays the time; for to be duly punctual, 'is too slow.—I was accusing you of neglect.

Enter Maskwell.

Mask. I confess you do reproach me when I see you here before me; but 'tis fit I should be still behind hand, still to be more and more indebted to your goodness.

L. T. You can excuse a fault too well, not to have been to blame—A ready answer shews you were prepar'd.

Mask. Guilt is ever at a loss, and confusion waits upon it; when innocence and bold truth are always ready for expression——

L. T. Not in love; words are the weak support of cold indifference; love has no language to be heard.

Mask. Excess of joy has made me stupid? Thus may my lips be ever clos'd. [*Kisses her.*] And thus——‘Oh who would not lose his speech, upon condition to have joys above it?’

L. T. Hold, let me lock the door first. [*Goes to the door.*]

Mask. [*Aside.*] That I believ'd; 'twas well I left the private passage open.

L. T. So, that's safe.

Mask. And so may all your pleasures be, and secret as this kiss——

Mel. And may all treachery be thus discover'd.

L. T. Ah! [*Leaps out.*]

Mel. Villain! [*Scrieks.*]

Mask. Nay then, there's but one way. [*Offers to draw.*]

Mask. Say you so, were you provided for an escape? Hold madam, you have no more holes for your escape; I stand between you and this fally-port. [*Runs out.*]

L. T. Shame grief and ruin haunt thee for this deceit, Oh! I could rack myself, play the vulture to my own heart, and gnaw it peace meal, for not boding to me this misfortune.

Mel. Be patient.——

L. T. Patient!

Mel. Consider I have you on the hook; you will but flounder

flounder yourself a-weary, and be nevertheless my prisoner.

L. T. I'll hold my breath and die, but I'll be free.

Mel. O madam, have a care of dying unprepar'd, I doubt you have some unrepented sins that may hang heavy, and retard your flight.

L. T. O! what shall I do? say? Whither shall I turn?
'Has hell no remedy?

'Mel. None, hell has serv'd you ev'n as Heav'n has done, left you to yourself.—You're in a kind of *Erasmus's* paradise; yet if you please you may make it a purgatory; and with a little penance and my absolution, all this may turn to good account.'

L. T. [*Aside.*] Hold in my passion, and fall, fall a little thou swelling heart; let me have some intermission of this rage, and one minute's coolness to dissemble.

[*She weeps.*]

Mel. You have been to blame.—I like those tears, and hope they are of the purest kind.—Penitential tears.

L. T. O the scene was shifted quick before me—I had not time to think—I was surprized to see a monster in the glass, and now I find it is myself; can you have mercy to forgive the faults I have imagin'd, but never put in practice—O consider, consider how fatal you have been to me, you have already kill'd the quiet of this life. The love of you was the first wand'ring fire that e'er misled my steps, and while I had only that in view, I was betray'd into unthought of ways of ruin.

Mel. May I believe this true?

L. T. O be not cruelly incredulous—How can you doubt these streaming eyes? Keep the severest eye o'er all my future conduct: and if I once relapse, let me not hope forgiveness, 'twill ever be in your power to ruin me—My lord shall sign to your desires; I will myself create you happiness, and *Cynthia* shall be this night your bride—Do but conceal my failings, and forgive.

Mel. Upon such terms, I will ever be your's in ev'ry honest way.

Maskwell softly introduces Lord Touchwood, and retires.

Mask. I have kept my word, he's here, but I must not be seen.

Ld. T.

Ld. T. Hell and amazement, she's in tears.

L. T. [*Kneeling.*] Eternal blessings thank you—
Ha! my lord list'ning! O fortune has o'erpaid me all,
all! all's my own! [*Aside.*]

Mel. Nay, I beseech you rise.

L. T. [*Aloud.*] Never, never! I'll grow to the ground,
be buried quick beneath it, ere I'll be consenting to so
damn'd a sin as incest! unnatural incest!

Mel. Ha!

L. T. O cruel man, will you not let me go—I'll for-
give all that's past—O Heav'n, you will not ravish me!

Mel. Confusion!

Ld. T. Monster, dog! your life shall answer this—

[*Draws and runs at Mel. is held by Lady Touchwood.*]

L. T. O 'Heav'n's' my Lord! Hold, hold, for
mercy's sake!

Mel. Confusion, my uncle! O the curs'd forcerefs.

L. T. Moderate your rage, good my lord! He's mad,
alas he's mad—Indeed he is, my Lord, and knows not
what he does—See how wild he looks.

Mel. By Heav'n 'twere senseless not to be mad, and
see such witchcraft.

L. T. My Lord, you hear him, he talks idly.

Ld. T. Hence from my sight, thou living infamy to
my name; when next I see that face, I'll write villain
in't with my sword's point.

Mel. Now, by my life, I will not go 'till I have made
known my wrongs—Nay, 'till I have made known yours,
which (if possible) are greater—though she has all the
host of hell her servants.

L. T. Alas he raves! talks very poetry. For Heav'n's
sake, away my Lord, he'll either tempt you to extrava-
gance, or commit some himself.

Mel. Death and furies, will you not hear me?—Why
by Heav'n she laughs, grins, points at you, makes you
her mark of insult and derision!

[*As she is going she turns back and smiles at him.*]

Ld. T. I fear he's mad indeed—Let's send Maskwell
to him.

Mel. Send him to her.

L. T.

L. T. Come, come, good my Lord, my heart akes so I shall faint if I stay. [*Exeunt Lord and Lady Touchwood.*]

Mel. O I could curse my stars, fate, and chance; all causes and accidents of fortune in this life! But to what purpose? Yet, 'death for a man to have the fruit of all his industry grow full and ripe, ready to drop into his mouth, and just when he holds out his hand to gather it to have a sudden whirlwind come, tear up tree and all, and bear away the very root and foundation of his hopes; What temper can contain? They talk of sending *Maskwell* to me; I never had more need of him—But what can he do? Imagination cannot form a fairer and more plausible design than this of his which has miscarried—O my precious aunt, I shall never thrive without I deal with the devil or another woman.

*Women like flames, have a destroying pow'r,
Ne'er to be quench'd, 'till they themselves devour.* [*Exit.*]

A C T V.

Enter Lady Touchwood and Maskwell.

L. T. **W**AS'T not lucky?

Mask. Lucky! Fortune is your own, and 'tis her interest so to be; 'by Heav'n' I believe you can controll her pow'r, and she fears it; though chance brought my lord, 'twas your own art that turn'd it to advantage.

L. T. 'Tis true, it might have been my ruin—But yonder's my lord, I believe he's coming to find you, I'll not be seen. [*Exit.*]

Mask. So; I durst not own my introducing my lord, though it succeeded well for her, for she would have suspected a design which I should have been puzzled to excuse. My lord is thoughtful—I'll be so too; yet he shall know my thoughts; or think he does——

Enter Lord Touchwood.

Mask. What have I done?

Ld. T.

Ld. T. Talking to himself!

Mask. 'Twas honest—and shall I be rewarded for it? No? 'twas honest, therefore I shan't;—Nay, rather therefore I ought not; for it rewards itself.

Ld. T. Unequal'd virtue; [Aside.

Mask. But should it be known! then I have lost a friend! He was an ill man, and I have gain'd; for half myself I lent him, and that I have recall'd; so I have served myself, and what is yet better, I have served a worthy lord to whom I owe myself.

Ld. T. Excellent man! [Aside.

Mask. Yet I am wretched—O there is a secret burns within this breast, which should it once blaze forth, would ruin all, consume my honest character, and brand me with the name of villain.

Ld. T. Ha!

Mask. Why do I love! Yet Heav'n and my waking conscience are my witnesses, I never gave one working thought a vent; which might discover that I lov'd, nor ever must; no, let it prey upon my heart; for I would rather die, than seem once, barely seem, dishonest:—O, should it once be known I love fair *Cynthia*, all this that I have done, would look like rival's malice, false friendship to my lord, and base self-interest. Let me perish first, and from this hour avoid all sight and speech, and, if I can, all thought of that pernicious beauty. Ha! but what is my distraction doing? I'm wildly talking to myself, and some ill chance might have directed malicious ears this way.

[Seems to start, seeing my Lord.

Ld. T. Start not—let guilty and dishonest souls start at the revelation of their thoughts, but be thou fix'd, as is thy virtue.

Mask. I am confounded and beg your lordship's pardon for those free discourses which I have had with myself.

Ld. T. Come, I beg your pardon that I over-heard you, and yet it shall not need—Honest *Maskwell*! thy and my good genius led me hither—Mine, in that I have discover'd so much manly virtue; thine, in that thou shalt have due reward of all thy worth. Give me thy hand—my nephew

nephew is the alone remaining branch of all our ancient family; him I thus blow away, and constitute thee in his room to be my heir——

Mask. Now fate forbid——

Ld. T. No more—I have resolv'd—The writings are ready drawn, and wanted nothing but to be sign'd, and have his name inserted—Your's will fill the blank as well——I will have no reply—Let me command this time; for 'tis the last, in which I will assume authority——hereafter, you shall rule where I have power.

Mask. I humbly would petition——

Ld. T. Is't for yourself?—[*Mask. pauses.*] I'll hear of nought for any body else.

Mask. Then, witness Heav'n, for me, this wealth and honour was not of my seeking, nor would I build my fortune on another's ruin: I had but one desire——

Ld. T. Thou shalt enjoy it——If all I'm worth in wealth or interest can purchase *Cynthia*, she is thine——I'm sure Sir *Paul's* consent will follow fortune; I'll quickly shew him which way that is going.

Mask. You oppress me with bounty; my gratitude is weak, and shrinks beneath the weight, and cannot rise to thank you—What, enjoy my love! forgive the transports of a blessing so unexpected, so unhop'd for, so unthought of!

Ld. T. I will confirm it, and rejoice with thee.

[*Exit.*

Mask. This is prosp'rous indeed—Why let him find me out a villain, settled in possession of a fair estate, and full fruition of my love, I'll bear the railings of a losing gamester——But shou'd he find me out before! 'tis dangerous to delay——Let me think——shou'd my lord proceed to treat openly of my marriage with *Cynthia*, all must be discover'd, and *Mellefont* can be no longer blinded.——It must not be; nay, shou'd my lady know it——ay, then were fine work indeed! Her fury wou'd spare nothing, tho' she involv'd herself in ruin. No, it must be by stratagem——I must deceive *Mellefont* once more, and get my lord to consent to my private management. He comes opportunely——Now will I, in my old way, discover the whole

whole and real truth of the matter to him, that he may not suspect one word on't.

*No Mask like open truth to cover lies,
As to go naked is the best disguise.*

Enter Mellefont.

Mel. O *Maskwell*, what hopes? I am confounded in a maze of thoughts, each leading into another, and all ending in perplexity. My uncle will not hear nor see me.

Mask. No matter, sir, don't trouble your head, all's in my power.

Mel. How? For Heav'n's sake?

Mask. Little do you think that your aunt has kept her word.—How the devil she wrought my lord into this dotage, I know not; but he's gone to Sir *Paul* about my marriage with *Cynthia*, and has appointed me his heir.

Mel. The devil he has! What's to be done?

Mask. I have it, it must be by stratagem; for it's in vain to make application to him. I think I have that in my head that cannot fail: Where's *Cynthia*?

Mel. In the garden.

Mask. Let us go and consult her, my life for your's, I cheat my lord. [*Exeunt*]

Enter Lord and Lady Touchwood.

L. T. *Maskwell* your heir, and marry *Cynthia*!

Ld. T. I cannot do too much for so much merit.

L. T. But this is a thing of too great moment to be so suddenly resolv'd. Why *Cynthia*? Why must he be marry'd? Is there not reward enough in raising his low fortune, but he must mix his blood with mine, and wed my niece? How know you that my brother will consent, or she? Nay, he himself perhaps may have some affections elsewhere.

Ld. T. No, I am convinc'd he loves her.

L. T. *Maskwell*, love *Cynthia*, impossible!

Ld. T. I tell you, he confess'd it to me.

L. T. Confusion! how's this!

[*Aside*]

Ld. T. His humility long stifled his passion: and his love of *Mellefont* would have made him still conceal it,—But by encouragement, I wrang the secret from him; and know he's no way to be rewarded but with her. I'll defer my farther proceedings in it, 'till you have consider'd it; but remember how we are both indebted to him.

[*Exit*]

L. T.

L. T. Both indebted to him! Yes, we are both indebted to him, if you knew all; villain! Oh, I am wild with this surprize of treachery: It is impossible, it cannot be.—He love *Cynthia*! What have I been assisting to his designs, his property only, 'a baiting place!' Now I see what made him false to *Mellefont*,———Shame and distraction! I cannot bear it: 'oh! what woman can bear 'to be a property? To be kindled to a flame, only to 'light him to another's arms; oh! that I were fire indeed, that I might burn the vile traitor.' What shall I do? How shall I think? I cannot think,———All my designs are lost, my love unfated, my revenge unfinished, and fresh cause of fury from unthought of plagues.

Enter Sir Paul Plyant.

Sir Paul. Madam, sister, my lady sister, did you see my lady my wife!

L. T. O Torture!

Sir Paul. Gads-bud, I can't find her high nor low; where can she be, think you?

L. T. Where she's serving you, as all your sex ought to be serv'd; making you a beast. Don't you know that you're a fool, brother?

Sir Paul. A fool; he, he, he! you're merry—No, no, not I, I know no such matter.

L. T. Why then you don't know half your happiness.

Sir Paul. That's a jest with all my heart, faith and troth.—But hark'ye, my lord told me something of a revolution of things; I don't know what to make on't——Gads-bud, I must consult my wife,——he talks of disinheriting his nephew; and I don't know what,—look you, sister, I must know what my girl has to trust to; or not a syllable of a wedding, gads-bud—'to shew 'you that I am not a fool.'

L. T. Hear me; consent to the breaking off this marriage, and the promoting any other, without consulting me, and I'll renounce all blood, all relation and concern with you for ever,—nay, I'll be you enemy, and pursue you to destruction, I'll tear your eyes out, and tread you under my feet.———

Sir Paul.

Sir *Paul*. Why, what's the matter now? Good Lord, what's all this for? Pooh, here's a joke indeed—Why, where's my wife?

L. *T*. With *Careless*, fool! most likely.

Sir *Paul*. O, if the be with Mr. *Careless*, 'tis well enough.

L. *T*. Fool, sot, insensible ox! but remember what I said to you, or you had better see my face no more; by this light you had.

Sir *Paul*. You're a passionate woman, gads-bud,—But to say truth, all our family are cholerick; I am the only peaceable person amongst 'em. [*Exeunt*.]

Enter Mellefont, Maskwell and Cynthia.

Mel. I know no other way but this he has propos'd; if you have love enough to run the venture.

Cynt. I don't know whether I have love enough—but I find I have obstinacy enough to pursue whatever I have once resolv'd; and a true female courage to oppose any thing that resists my will, tho' 'twere reason itself.

Mask. That's right,—Well, I'll secure the writings, and run the hazard along with you.

Cynt. But how can the coach and fix horses be got ready without suspicion?

Mask. Leave it to my care; that shall be so far from being suspected, that it shall be got ready by my lord's own order.

Mel. How?

Mask. Why, I intend to tell my lord the whole matter of our contrivance, that's my way.

Mel. I don't understand you.

Mask. Why, I'll tell my lord, I laid this plot with you, on purpose to betray you; and that which put me upon it, was, the finding it impossible to gain the lady any other way, but in the hopes of her marrying you.—

Mel. So ———

Mask. So, why so, while you're busied in making yourself ready, I'll wheedle her into the coach; and instead of you, borrow my lord's chaplain, and so run away with her myself.

Mel. Oh! I conceive you, you'll tell him so?

Mask.

Mask. Tell him so! ay, why you don't think I mean to do so?

Mel. No, no! ha, ha! I dare swear thou wilt not.

Mask. Therefore for our farther security, I would have you disguis'd like a parson, that if my lord should have curiosity to peep, he may not discover you in the coach, but think the cheat is carried on as he would have it.

Mel. Excellent *Maskwell*! thou wert certainly meant for a statesman or a Jesuit,———but thou art too honest for one, and too pious for the other.

Mask. Well, get yourselves ready, and meet me in half an hour, yonder in my lady's dressing-room; 'go by the back stairs, and so we may slip down without being observ'd.'—I'll send the chaplain to you with his robes; I have made him my own,——and ordered him to meet us to-morrow morning at *St. Albans*; there we will sum up this account, to all our satisfactions.

Mel. Should I begin to thank or praise thee, I should waste the little time we have. [Exit.

Mask. Madam, you will be ready?

Cynt. I will be punctual to the minute. [Going.

Mask. Stay, I have a doubt—Upon second thoughts, we had better meet in the chaplain's chamber here, the corner chamber at this end of the gallery, there is a back way into it, so that you need not come through this door——and a pair of private stairs leading down to the stables——It will be more convenient.

Cynt. I am guided by you,——but *Mellefont* will mistake.

Mask. No, no, I'll after him immediately, and tell him!

Cynt. I will not fail. [Exit.

Mask. Why, *qui vult decipi, decipiatur*.—'Tis no fault of mine, I have told 'em in plain terms, how easy 'tis for me to cheat 'em; and if they will not hear the serpent's hiss, they must be stung into experience, and future caution.——Now to prepare my lord to consent to this.——But first I must instruct my little Levite; there is no plot, publick or private, that can expect to prosper without one of them has a finger in't, he promised me to be within at this hour,——*Mr. Saygrace*. [Goes to the chamber door, and knocks.

Saygr.

Sayg. [*looking out.*] Sweet sir, I will but pen the last line of an acrostick, and be with you in the twinkling of an ejaculation, in the pronouncing of an *Amen*, or before you can——

Mask. Nay, good Mr. *Saygrace*, do not prolong the time, by describing to me the shortness of your stay; rather if you please, defer the finishing of your wit, and let us talk about our business, it shall be tithes in your way.

Sayg. [*Enters*] You shall prevail, I would break off in the middle of a sermon to do you a pleasure.

Mask. You could not do me a greater,—except——the business in hand——Have you provided a habit for *Mellefont*?

Sayg. I have, they are ready in my chamber, together with a clean starch'd band and cuffs.

Mask. Good, let them be carry'd to him,—have you fitch'd the gown sleeve, that he may be puzzled, and waste time in putting it on?

Sayg. I have; the gown will not be indued without perplexity.

Mask. Meet me in half an hour, here in your own chamber. When *Cynthia* comes, let there be no light, and do not speak, that she may not distinguish you from *Mellefont*. I'll urge haste, to excuse your silence.

Sayg. You have no more commands?

Mask. None, your text is short.

Sayg. But pithy, and I will handle it with discretion.

Mask. It will be the first you have so serv'd.

[*Exit Saygrace.*]

Enter Lord Touchwood.

Ld. T. Sure I was born to be controlled by those I should command: My very slaves will shortly give me rules how I shall govern them.

Mask. I am concern'd to see your lordship discompos'd——

Ld. T. Have you seen my wife lately, or disoblig'd her?

Mask. No my lord. What can this mean! [*Aside.*]

Ld. T. Then *Mellefont* has urg'd some body to incense her

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her—Something she has heard of you which carries her beyond the bounds of patience.

Mask. This I fear'd. [*Aside.*] Did not your lordship tell her of the honours you design'd me?

Ld. T. Yes.

Mask. 'Tis that; you know my lady has a high spirit, she thinks I am unworthy.

Ld. T. Unworthy! 'Tis an ignorant pride in her to think so——Honesty to me is true nobility. However, 'tis my will it shall be so, and that shou'd be convincing to her as much as reason——By Heav'n, I'll not be wife-ridden; were it possible, it should be done this night.

Mask. By Heav'n he meets my wishes. [*Aside.*] Few things are impossible to willing minds.

Ld. T. Instruct me how this may be done, you shall see I want no inclination.

Mask. I had laid a small design for to-morrow (as love will be inventing) which I thought to communicate to your lordship——But it may be as well done to-night.

Ld. T. Here's company——Come this way, and tell me. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter Careless and Cynthia.

Care. Is not that he, now gone out with my lord?

Cynt. Yes.

Care. By Heav'n there's treachery——The confusion that I saw your father in, my Lady *Touchwood's* passion, with what imperfectly I over-heard between my lord and her, confirm me in my fears. Where's *Mellefont*?

Cynt. Here he comes.

Enter Mellefont.

Did *Maskwell* tell you any thing of the chaplain's chamber?

Mel. No; my dear, will you get ready——the things are all in my chamber; I want nothing but the habit.

Care. You are betray'd, and *Maskwell* is the villain I always thought him.

Cynt. When you were gone, he said his mind was chang'd, and bid me meet him in the chaplain's room, pretending

pretending immediately to follow you, and give you notice.

Mel. How!

Care. There's *Saygrace* tripping by with a bundle under his arm—He cannot be ignorant that *Maskwell* means to use his chamber; let's follow and examine him.

Mel. 'Tis loss of time—I cannot think him false.

[*Exit Mellefont.*]

Enter Lord Touchwood.

Cynt. My lord musing!

Ld. T. He has a quick invention, if this were suddenly design'd—Yet he says he had prepar'd my chaplain already.

Cynt. How's this! Now I fear indeed.

Ld. T. *Cynthia* here! Alone, fair cousin, and melancholy?

Cynt. Your lordship was thoughtful.

Ld. T. My thoughts were on serious business, not worth your hearing.

Cynt. Mine were on treachery concerning you, and may be worth your hearing.

Ld. T. Treachery concerning me! pray be plain—Hark! What noise!

Mask. [*Within.*] Will you not hear me?

L. T. [*Within.*] No, monster! Traitor! No.

Cynt. My lady and *Maskwell*? this may be lucky—My lord, let me intreat you to stand behind this screen, and listen; perhaps this chance may give you proof of what you ne'er could have believ'd from my suspicions.

Enter Lady Touchwood with a dagger, and Maskwell:

Cynthia and Lord Touchwood listening.

L. T. You want but leisure to invent fresh falsehood, and footh me to a fond belief of all your fictions; but I will stab the lye that's forming in your heart, and save a sin, in pity to your soul.

Mask. Strike then—Since you will have it so.

L. T. Ha! A steady villain to the last!

Mask. Come, why do you dally with me thus?

L. T. Thy stubborn temper shocks me, and you knew it would—this is cunning all, and not courage; no I know the well: but thou shalt miss thy aim.

Mask.

Mask. Ha, ha, ha!

L. T. Ha! do you mock my rage? Then this shall punish your fond, rash contempt! Again smile!

[*Goes to strike.*]

And such a smile as speaks in ambiguity!

Ten thousand meanings lurk in each corner of that various face.

O! that they were written in thy heart,

That I, with this, might lay thee open to my sight!

But then 'twill be too late to know——

Thou hast, thou hast found the only way to turn my Rage; too well thou know'st my jealous soul cou'd never bear uncertainty. Speak then, and tell me—Yet are you silent? Oh, I am wilder'd in all passions! but thus my anger melts. [*Weeps.*] Here, take this poniard, for my very spirits faint, and I want strength to hold it, thou hast disarm'd my soul.

[*Gives the dagger.*]

Ld. T. Amazement shakes me.—Where will this end?"

Mask. So, 'tis well——let your wild fury have a vent? and when you have temper, tell me.

L. T. Now, now, now I am calm, and can hear you.

Mask. [*Aside.*] Thanks, my invention; and now I have it for you.—First tell me what urg'd you to this violence? For your passion broke in such imperfect terms, that yet I am to learn the cause.

L. T. My Lord himself surpriz'd me with the news, you were to marry *Cynthia*——That you had own'd your love to him, and his indulgence would assist you to attain your ends.

Cynt. How, my lord!

Ld. T. Pray forbear all resentments for a while, and let us hear the rest.

Mask. I grant you in appearance all is true; I seem'd consenting to my lord; nay, transported with the blessing——But could you think that I, who had been happy in your lov'd embraces, could e'er be fond of an inferior slavery?

Ld. T. 'Ha! O poison to my ears! what do I hear!

Cynt. Nay, good my lord, forbear resentment, let us hear it out.

Ld. T.

Ld. T. Yes, I will contain, tho' I cou'd burst.

Mask. 'I that had wanton'd in the rich circle of your world of love, cou'd be confin'd within the puny province of a girl?' No——Yet tho' I dote on each last favour more than all the rest; though I would give a limb for every look you cheaply throw away on any other object of your love; yet so far I prize your pleasures o'er my own, that all this seeming plot that I have laid, has been to gratify your taste, and cheat the world, to prove a faithful rogue to you.

L. T. If this were true——But how can it be?

Mask. I have so contriv'd, that *Mellefont* will presently in the chaplain's habit, wait for *Cynthia* in your dressing-room: But I have put the change upon her, that she may be elsewhere employ'd—Do you go with your cloak over your face, meet him in her stead; you may go privately by the back stairs, and, unperceiv'd, there you may propose to reinstate him in his uncle's favour, if he'll comply with your desires; his case is desperate, and I believe he'll yield to any conditions.—If not, here take this; you may employ it better, than in the heart of one who is nothing when not your's. [*Gives the dagger.*]

L. T. Thou can'st deceive every body,——Nay, thou hast deceiv'd me; but 'tis as I would wish,——Trusty villain! I could worship thee——

Mask. No more.—It wants but a few minutes of the time; and *Mellefont's* love will carry him there before his hour.

L. T. I go, I fly, incomparable *Maskwell*! [*Exit.*]

Mask. So, this was a pinch indeed, my invention was upon the rack; and made discovery of her last plot: I hope *Cynthia* and my chaplain will be ready, I'll prepare for the expedition. [*Exit.*]

Cynthia and Lord Touchwood come forward.

Cynt. Now, my lord?

Ld. T. Astonishment binds up my rage! villainy upon villainy! Heav'ns, what a long track of dark deceit has this discover'd! I am confounded when I look back, and want a clue to guide me through the various mazes of unheard of treachery, My wife! O torture! My shame! My ruin!

Cynt.

Cynt. My lord, have patience, and be sensible how great our happiness is, that this discovery was not made too late.

Ld. T. I thank you, yet it may be still too late, if we don't presently prevent the execution of their plots;—Ha, I'll do't. Where's *Mellefant*, my poor injur'd nephew, —How shall I make him ample satisfaction?—

Cynt. I dare answer for him.

Ld. T. I do him fresh wrong to question his forgiveness; for I know him to be all goodness, —Yet my wife! 'damn her,'—She'll think to meet him in that dressing-room;—Was't not so? And *Maskwell* will expect you in the chaplain's chamber.—For once, I'll add my plot too.—Let us haste to find out, and inform my nephew; and do you, quickly as you can, bring all the company into this gallery.—I'll expose the strumpet, and the villain. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter Lord Froth and Sir Paul Plyant.

Ld. Froth. By Heav'n's I have slept an age—Sir *Paul*, what a clock is't? Past eight, on my conscience, my lady's is the most inviting couch; and a slumber there, is the prettiest amusement! but where's all the company?—

Sir Paul. The company, gads-bud, I don't know, my lord, but here's the strangest revolution, all turn'd topsy-turvy; as I hope for tranquility.

Ld. Froth. O Heav'n's, what's the matter? Where's my wife?

Sir Paul. All turn'd topsy-turvy as sure as a gun.

Ld. Froth. How do you mean! my wife!

Sir Paul. The strangest posture of affairs!

Ld. Froth. What, my wife?

Sir Paul. No, no, I mean the family,—Your lady's affairs may be in a very good posture; I saw her go into the garden with Mr. *Brisk*.

Ld. Froth. How? where, when, what to do?

Sir Paul. I suppose they have been laying their heads together.

Ld. Froth. How?

Sir Paul. Nay, only about poetry, I suppose, my lord; making couplets.

Ld.

Ld. Froth. Couplets.

Sir Paul. Oh, here they come.

Enter Lady Froth and Brisk.

Brisk. My lord, your humble servant; Sir Paul yours — the finest night!

L. Froth. My dear, Mr. Brisk and I have been star-gazing, I don't know how long.

Sir Paul. Does it not tire your ladyship? are not you weary with looking up?

L. Froth. Oh, no, I love it violently, — My dear; you're melancholy.

Ld. Froth. No, my dear; I'm but just awake.

L. Froth. Snuff some of my spirit of hartshorn.

Ld. Froth. I've some of my own, thank you, my dear.

L. Froth. Well, I swear, Mr. Brisk, you understood astronomy like an old Egyptian.

Brisk. Not comparably to your ladyship; you are the very Cynthia of the skies, and queen of stars.

L. Froth. That's because I have no light, but what's by reflection from you, who are the sun.

Brisk. Madam, you have eclips'd me quite, let me perish, — I can't answer that.

L. Froth. No matter, — Hark'ee, shall you and I make an almanack together.

Brisk. With all my soul. — Your ladyship has made me the man in't already, I'm so full of the wounds which you have given.

L. Froth. O finely taken! I swear now you are even with me, O Parnassus, you have an infinite deal of wit.

Sir Paul. So he has, gads-bud, and so has your ladyship.

Enter Lady Plyant, Careless and Cynthia.

L. P. You tell me most surprizing things; bless me, who would ever trust a man? O my heart akes for fear they should be all deceitful alike.

Care. You need not fear, madam, you have charms to fix inconstancy itself.

L. P. O dear, you make me blush.

Ld. Froth. Come, my dear, shall we take leave of my lord and lady?

Cynt.

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Cynt. They'll wait upon your lordship presently.

L. Froth. Mr. Brisk, my coach shall set you down.

All. What's the matter?

[A great shriek from the corner of the stage.

Lady Touchwood runs out affrighted, my Lord after her, like a Parson.

L. T. O I'm betray'd.—Save me, help me.

Ld. T. Now what evasion, wretch!

L. T. Stand off, let me go.

[Exit.

Ld. T. Go, and thy own infamy pursue thee.—You stare as you were all amazed,—I don't wonder at it—but too soon you'll know mine, and that woman's shame.

Enter Mellefont disguised in a Parson's Habit and pulling in Maskwell.

Mel. Nay, by Heav'n you shall be seen.—Careless, your hand;—Do you hold down your head? Yes I am your chaplain, look in the face of your injur'd friend; thou wonder of all falsehood!

Ld. T. Are you silent, monster?

Mel. Good Heav'ns! How I believ'd and lov'd this man!—Take him hence, for he's a disease to my sight.

Ld. T. Secure that manifold villain.

[Servants seize him.

Care. Miracle of ingratitude?

"Sir Paul. O Providence! Providence! what discoveries are here."

Brisk. This is all very surprizing, let me perish.

L. Froth. You know I told you Saturn look'd a little more angry than usual.

Ld. T. We'll think of punishment at leisure, but let me hasten to do justice, in rewarding virtue and wrong'd innocence.—Nephew, I hope I have your pardon, and Cynthia's.

Mel. We are your lordship's creatures.

Ld. T. And be each others comfort;—Let me join your hands.—Uninterrupted bliss attend you both; mutual love, lasting health, and circling joys, tread round each happy year of your long lives.

Let

Let secret villainy from hence be warn'd;
 Howe'er in private mischiefs are conceiv'd,
 Torture and shame attend their open birth;
 Like vipers in the breast, base treachery lies,
 Still gnawing that, whence first it did arise;
 No sooner born, but the wile parent dies.

[Exeunt Omnes.]

E P I L O G U E.

*C*O U' D poets but foresee how plays would take,
Then they cou'd tell what epilogues to make;

Whether to thank or blame their audience most:
But that late knowledge does much hazard cost,
'Till dice are thrown, there's nothing won, nor lost.

So 'till the thief has stol'n, he cannot know
Whether he shall escape the law, or no.

But poets run much greater hazards far,
Than they who stand their trials at the bar;
The law provides a curb for its own fury,
And suffers judges to direct the jury.

But in this court, what difference does appear!
For every one's both judge and jury here;
Nay, and what's worse, an executioner.

All have a right and title to some part,
Each choosing that in which he has most art.
The dreadful men of learning all confound,
Unless the fable's good, and moral sound.

The vizor-masks, that are in pit and gallery,
Approve, or damn the repartee and rally.

The lady criticks, who are better read,
Inquire if characters are nicely bred;

If the soft things are penn'd and spoke with grace:
They judge of action too, and time, and place;
In which we do not doubt but they're discerning,
For that's a kind of assignation learning.

Beaux judge of dress; the witlings judge of songs;
The cuckoldom, of ancient right, to cits belongs.

Thus

EPILOGUE.

Thus poor poets, the favour are deny'd,
 Even to make exceptions, when they're try'd.
 'Tis hard that they must every one admit:
 Methinks I see some faces in the pit,
 Which must of consequence be foes to wit.
 You who can judge, to sentence may proceed;
 But tho' he cannot write, let him be freed
 At least from their contempt, who cannot read.

FINIS.

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